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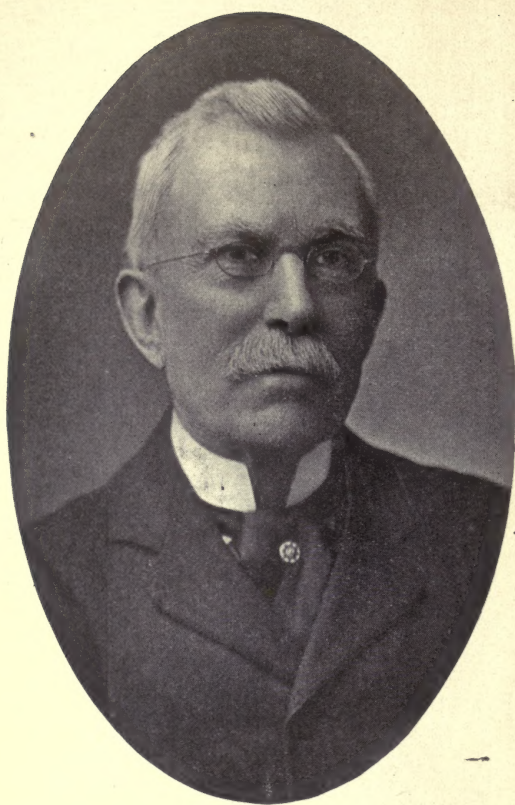




IN THE DAYS OF VICTORIA







*Thos. F. Plowman*

IN THE DAYS OF VICTORIA  
SOME MEMORIES OF MEN AND THINGS  
BY THOMAS F. PLOWMAN  
WITH FIFTEEN ILLUSTRATIONS

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IN THE DAYS OF VICTORIA



# IN THE DAYS OF VICTORIA

## CHAPTER I

The Evolution and Method of these Reminiscences—The Victorian Era—  
My Birth and Parentage—The Old House at Home—The Irish Famine  
—The *Birkenhead*.

IT has been said that memory is the only fountain of perpetual youth. This is an inducement to draw upon it in one's old age as one sits, sometimes in the sunshine and sometimes in the shadows, and to fill a loving-cup from it in remembrance of old friends who live but in recollection. A period of enforced retirement from physical activity, due to illness, tempted me to seek this distraction from certain aches and pains. Hence this budget of reminiscences, which may be taken as an endeavour to depict, from personal experience, some aspects of the social life of the realm in the early and mid-period of the Victorian régime.

The individual who records his impressions of the little world in which he has moved may be, as in this case, a negligible quantity, but his thoughts and his actions, if faithfully set down, may add something to the picture of the life of his day. As to the spirit which has guided my pen, let me say at the start that, though I am no philosopher, I have long pinned my faith—as my father did before me—to the doctrine of cheerfulness; so when there is a humorous side to anything I try to discover it. If, therefore, my seriousness does not always keep pace with that of my readers, I will ask them to please put down my levity to heredity and inclination combined, and make the best of it.

I do not propose to adopt a strictly chronological order

in the marshalling of my recollections. Through no fault of my own, so far as I can see, the occupations of my life have been very varied. A jack of all trades does not attract, so I will say in extenuation of myself that I have put my hand to what came in my way, in the hope that, though I might not prove myself a past-master, I might manage, by dint of sticking to it, just to pull through. A man who chooses to do only such work as he fancies may sometimes suffer from the supply of the particular article he deals in being in excess of the demand. But this is a side-issue, my point being that I desire to account for not following the usual practice, in the case of reminiscences, by ranging them in order of date. To avoid overlapping, I propose to classify my experiences according to subject, and this will make it easier for readers who may have no particular interest in certain of these subjects to give them the go-by. I have purposely omitted any reference to country topics, although, by virtue of one of my chief occupations, they have loomed large with me, because, if I were to add my fifty years' experiences as an agricultural secretary to what I have to say about my town-life, I should certainly overtax the patience both of my readers and my publisher.

My reminiscences will be mainly limited to those comparatively far-off times embraced by the early and middle period of the great Queen's reign, when so many important changes were either being initiated or were beginning to make their influence felt. I use the term "far-off," not so much as representing the lapse of time as the distance we have traversed in regard to the changes in our manners and customs and general mode of life, brought about in various directions by the march of progress in which science, especially, has borne a distinguished part.

It is the fashion to-day to decry the Victorian era and point to it as a time when, in its early stage, our women-folk wore expansive and flounced frocks, abnormal bonnets, Paisley shawls and corkscrew ringlets, and our menfolk, beaver hats, tail-coats, gorgeous waistcoats, strapped trousers, black stockings and brobdingnagian collars, and dropped snuff over most of their garments. Later on, in the

sixties, for female wear, Garibaldi jackets, crinolines, pork-pie hats and chignons were *de rigueur*, whilst velvet jackets, peg-top trousers, elastic-side boots and Dundreary whiskers beautified, or otherwise, the male sex; the final touch of fashionable perfection being achieved when you parted your hair in the middle both front and back. But the age of Victoria deserves to live in memory for something more than this, for, after all, it was a "spacious time" in more than one respect, and "there were giants in those days," in literature, at any rate, and not in that alone.

The orthodox retailer of reminiscences usually begins by presenting his readers with a full, true and particular account of his birth and parentage, and, if he has any well-to-do forbears with a bit of breeding about them, we learn all about them in the first chapter. I shall not follow custom in this respect, as in many others, because, in the first place, I never had, so far as I know, any ancestors worth talking about, and if I had it wouldn't be much to boast of inasmuch as I had no voice in their selection, and couldn't have changed them if they failed to fulfil expectations. Suffice it to say then that I was "born of poor but honest parents," in the sense that they were far removed from being millionaires. Under these circumstances, in accordance with the rule laid down in the story-books of my childhood when the infant's parents came under the above-named description, I ought to have had a fairy-godmother present at my birth to endow me with such priceless gifts as only fairies can bestow. However, I have no recollection of anything of the sort, so we must take it for granted that I entered upon the world under very ordinary conditions, was a very ordinary baby, and so became a very ordinary citizen. And that's all I can say upon the subject.

Although I shall endeavour to make my reminiscences as general as possible, many of them must, perforce, have for their background the city of Oxford in which I was born and bred, and in which I lived until I was well past the meridian of youth. A University city, under dual control, has certain social and other features which cannot be said to be common to all municipalities, inasmuch as there are

two distinct currents of life in it, the civic and the academic, which must needs at times intermingle. I hope, however, that this may rather add to than detract from such interest as folk living elsewhere may take in what I have to tell. As I held office under University and city in turn, I had opportunity of seeing something of the inner life of both.

The house in which all the early portion of my life was spent was a very old one, with panelled rooms, beam-supported ceilings and a great old-fashioned staircase, whilst attached to it were vaulted cellars to which you descended by a flight of stone steps leading apparently to darkness and mystery. These vaults are over eight centuries old and extend right across the road, joining similar vaults attached to the opposite house. This part of the city was anciently known as the Jewry, as, in the old days, the Hebraic fraternity gathered themselves together there. One of the vaults belonging to the house was used as a cess-pool when I was a boy, and I remember when it was cleaned out the remains of a large furnace were disclosed, supposed to be used by the Jews who dealt in precious metals. The house was within close earshot of Great Tom, the Christ Church curfew, which for centuries nightly at nine o'clock solemnly boomed one hundred and one times, that being the old number of students on the foundation, as a warning to them to get themselves within the college walls. Alas, the war has silenced Tom after all these years, for so sonorous and far-reaching are its tones that it was feared that they would give Zeppelins untimely intimation of Alma Mater's proximity.

Oftentimes, as a child, have I laid awake and listened, with something akin to awe, to the deep-toned note of the old bell with its emphatic reminder that I was dwelling under the ægis of a University, to whose ordinances, provided by special legislation, a citizen has to submit himself. When I awoke in the morning, the city came more within my purview, inasmuch as we lived next door but one to the Town Hall, were opposite the City Police Station and were in full view of the City Church, whither the Mayor and Corporation went in state twice every Sunday and on some other appointed days, whilst we overlooked Carfax,

that busy thoroughfare, deriving its name from the French *quatre voies* because the four main streets there intersect. Here the pulse of civic life beat fastest ; here the weekly corn market was held in the open air in all weathers till, in the days of my youth, my father persuaded the farmers and dealers to meet under cover ; here official municipal announcements were made ; here the parliamentary representatives were chaired ; and here every circus or other procession was bound to exhibit itself. Were there ever such windows as ours for youngsters to flatten their little noses against ? What a panorama of life's activities was unfolded to us ! and how we revelled in it !

So some of my earliest recollections cluster round Carfax, and one of the first sights in my remembrance which I beheld from the windows in question was a sad one. Though it was in the late forties, it dwells still in my memory and strangely enough it relates to what has been with this country ever since as it had been long before, viz. the Irish Question. For some time after the great famine in 1846 and 1847, the poor, starved peasantry migrated in large numbers elsewhere, in the hope of finding a means, unvouchsafed to them on their native soil, of keeping body and soul together. Thousands emigrated ; whilst many others came over to England, adding themselves too often to the pauper-roll of this country. Sometimes a whole troop of them would arrive in a town together, and, in such a case, they were accorded a resting-place for the night, and were then hurried on to the next town. Looking out of the window one evening, I beheld a link in this migratory chain illustrated by the saddest of processions. It consisted of a number of toil-worn men, women and children, with the babies borne on their mothers' backs, all in rags and tatters, headed by a beadle. They were being conducted to the police station, where arrangements would have to be made for sheltering them elsewhere for the night. On the stretch of pavement in front of the station, weary and footsore they lay themselves down awaiting the order to move on to an authorized resting-place. As my mother stood by me at the window, her heart was touched by the piteous sight, and I am thankful

to remember that, young as I was, I was not insensible to the same feeling. But my mother, who had the great gift of charity in its best and most practical sense, was not long in translating it into action. So she speedily ministered to the immediate wants of the poor wanderers by sending over to them a bountiful supply of meat and drink as the only help she could give. And then there came into my life something akin to a heavenly vision in the privilege of witnessing a scene which to me has never been exceeded in pathos. When these poor, dejected waifs realized the extent of the sympathy bestowed upon them, their gratitude knew no bounds. They rose to their feet and with uplifted hands and hearts called down blessings upon the house whence came the help. I can still see their touching gesticulations of thankfulness giving emphasis to the outpourings of their hearts. To me it is a priceless memory, and I would sooner part with any other that remains with me than this. I am thankful to have had vouchsafed to me so beautiful a recollection of my mother—who died, alas! before I reached my teens—which has so indelibly stamped her character upon my mind while it brought home to me in all its fullness the truth that “it is more blessed to give than to receive.” Even after this long lapse of years, I can never recall this incident without something akin to emotion.

I cannot leave my window without reference to something else I saw from it connected with an incident which never fails to stir the blood when we think of it. As our house was on the direct line of route between the L. and N.W.R. Station on the New Road and the G.W.R. Station on the Abingdon Road, though the latter station has long been removed from that site, we often enjoyed the spectacle—always a most attractive one to children—of regiments marching across Carfax from one station to the other. In this way we saw a draft from a regiment go past with little thought at the time that we were looking upon men whose fame would be imperishable. They were on their way to the Kafir War, and one day some time afterwards my father told us that they had gone to their last home under circumstances which thrilled the whole country

through and through, for they went down in the *Birkenhead*. The story of how, when death stared them in the face, they formed up on deck at the word of command, without a single attempt to save themselves, whilst the women and children were placed in the boats, has been told in prose, in poetry, and on canvas. Officers and men, as steady as though they were on parade, sank with the ship, but not into oblivion, for their fame has gone out into all lands. What a magnificent testimony to the value of discipline and the noble qualities it carries in its train ! Naturally, at the time, we lament such tragedies as are represented by the loss of the *Birkenhead*, and the Balaclava charge. But what a glorious heritage for the nation are such deeds of heroism, not only for the sake of their influence, at the time of their accomplishment, but also for the inestimable example they afford to succeeding generations ! Surely, that is one of the great consolations vouchsafed to a nation when the very flower of its population lays down its life at the shrine of duty, as thousands have done of late, and are still doing daily with a devotion and a chivalry which has never been surpassed ! How great an asset will this not be to the whole Empire in the days to come ! " Who dies if England lives ! "

## CHAPTER II

The Great Exhibition—The Koh-i-noor—Soyer's Symposium—A Plate-snatcher—The Old Cornish Woman—The Sydenham Palace—Railways—An Old Whip.

**A**LTHOUGH, as I have already pointed out, many of my recollections owe their origin to the University city, I would not have it inferred that they will be bounded by it. London was within such easy reach of it that I began going there in my childhood and followed it up in later years, for, with the vast opportunities it afforded of seeing persons and things not to be found elsewhere, it always possessed a great attraction for me. One of my early recollections, in connection with matters outside my own home, was a journey to town, though I saw very little of the latter, as the Great Exhibition of 1851 was the objective and the time was limited to a day. As I was born in 1844, I was then seven years of age, and, after all this lapse of time, my impressions have remained almost, if not quite, as vivid as they were a twelvemonth after the event. My father was the secretary of the Exhibition for the county in which we lived, and I have still the bronze medal and large engraved diploma presented to him by the Prince Consort in recognition of his services. My father was also an exhibitor of one or two inventions, for which he was honourably mentioned. I may say, in explanation, that the Exhibition, being so completely a novelty, was managed in several respects upon different lines, so far as the collection of exhibits was concerned, to any that succeeded it. It was the business of the local secretaries to make the Exhibition known in all quarters of the district for which they were responsible, with a view to the gathering together of exhibits.

Hence it was that I heard a very great deal about the Exhibition before it took place, for it was continually being discussed in the family circle. Many called to make

inquiries respecting it, and several articles for exhibition were deposited at the house. Very incongruous some of these were, for people had an impression that anything out of the common way would be welcome. Among other things I remember we had sent in, was a sixpence on which had been engraved the whole of the Lord's Prayer, whilst old ladies came with various specimens of their needlework, such as patchwork quilts made of many hundred different pieces of material.

Everybody spoke of it as "the Great Exhibition," and, notwithstanding that there have been many such shows since, of much greater magnitude and splendour, it has never lost its designation as "great." Certainly no Exhibition has ever created the interest and excitement in the country as did this one.

Our pleasure-party consisted of my father and mother, an old friend of the family and his wife, and myself. Although I had only travelled once or twice by train previously, the journey left no impression whatever upon my mind, which is a perfect blank until I reached Paddington, and from that point my recollections of the day begin. I had heard so much about London streets and their beauties that I had almost begun to think with Dick Whittington that they were paved with gold. Thence arose my first disillusionment. My parents who, like Mrs. Gilpin, had a frugal mind, thought that we could well save the cost of a vehicle by walking from Paddington to Hyde Park, and we went by way of streets in which there were hardly any shops. Hence, regarding these streets as a type of the rest, I remember I inveighed strongly against the dissemination of the fabulous stories that had painted London thoroughfares in such glowing colours. I stoutly maintained that the Metropolis was in this respect far behind our own town.

Going over the bridge across the Serpentine, the great Exhibition was before me, and I saw it as Thackeray so well described it :

"A blazing arch of lucid glass  
Leaps like a fountain from the grass  
To meet the sun.  
A Palace as for Fairy Prince,  
A rare pavilion such as man  
Saw never, since mankind began."

On nearing the entrance, the first thing that attracted and very much impressed me was the spectacle of soldiers in great bearskin caps standing in sentry boxes just outside the pay gates. It seemed so curious that they should be exhibited in boxes, for I regarded them as part and parcel of the show.

When I had passed into the Exhibition, my expectations were more than realized. The sense of space, air and brightness was borne in upon me in a way that left nothing to be desired, and the colouring imparted by the many flags and such exhibits as carpets, tapestry, etc., hanging from the galleries, all added to the effect; whilst everything seemed on a vast scale. I was particularly struck by the sight of large trees growing in the midst of a huge building, and sought an explanation as to why they should have planted them there instead of in the open air, for I regarded them, as I did the Grenadiers, in the light of exhibits. I was content to accept as sufficient that they were there before the great glass house was built and that they could not be moved.

I had three things in my mind which I particularly desired to see. The first and foremost was the Koh-i-noor diamond, the great jewel which was more talked about than anything else there; the second was a bed that turned people out if they did not get up in time; the third was the crystal fountain. I saw No. 3 first and was disappointed in it, and I think I was not alone in this. It looked somewhat insignificant in so large a space. But it had its use, for it was the great meeting-place for people who separated in the Exhibition and wanted to reunite later on in the day, and it was impressed upon me that if, by any unfortunate mischance, I happened to get separated from the rest, I was to ask my way to this spot, and stop there till I was once more in safe custody. I shuddered to think what might happen to me if I lost sight of my parents amid the crowds in this vast space, and kept my hand tightly locked in that of my mother. Whenever I go to the Crystal Palace at Sydenham, I always, for old associations' sake, pay a visit to this fountain and try to think what my feelings were on that eventful day when I first saw it.

Shortly afterwards we went up into one of the galleries, where I soon became bewildered with the multiplicity of different things I had to look at ; not only those on exhibition, but the human additions to the show representing so many nationalities. Among these, the turbaned Turks and the pig-tailed Chinamen stand out conspicuously in my memory. I was also particularly struck with two men, whose entire outward costume, viz. hat, coat, waist-coat and trousers, was made of carefully plaited straw. Although they were, apparently, like ourselves, only visitors, they were the observed of all observers.

All this time I was on the look-out for the Koh-i-noor, and at last I caught sight of an object that I was sure was the mountain of light itself, and which, whatever else failed to come up to expectation, at least was equal to anything I had imagined. I gazed at it with delight from the gallery, for it was in the middle of the central transept, and, with the sun shining full on it, it displayed all the colours of the rainbow and was one mass of glitter. I eagerly called my parents' attention to this in case they should miss it, and was at once told :

"That's not the Koh-i-noor, that's a lighthouse lantern." I had my own opinion as to this, and was quite content, until I saw something better, to believe that for once my parents were wrong. Some time after this, when we had descended to the ground level, I was taken to where a crowd of people were gathered round something enclosed in a sort of cage.

"Now," said my father, "you shall see the Koh-i-noor."

And the crowd were asked to make way for the little boy, who was lifted up in order that he might feast his eyes upon it. Looking between the bars of this cage, I perceived, suspended over a small velvet cushion, what looked to me like a little bit of glass, and no more resembling what I had pictured the Koh-i-noor to be than the Exhibition itself was like our Town Hall. Therefore, when, on getting out of the crowd, I was told that now I had seen the great diamond, I simply scoffed at the idea. I said :

"Yes, I certainly have seen it, but it was when we were

up in the gallery," and no amount of explanation or assurance could convince me to the contrary.

I was sure that either my parents did not know the Koh-i-noor when they saw it, or else that they had some particular reason for putting me on the wrong track. I ultimately dismissed the first hypothesis as untenable, and clung to the second, which it took some time to dissipate.

However, my thoughts were soon distracted by my parents—who took a good deal of trouble in the search—discovering what I had set my heart upon seeing. This was a bedstead with a clock in the woodwork at the foot. If you wanted to get up at six o'clock you set the alarm attached to the clock for that hour. If you slumbered on five minutes later, the bed-clothes, by means of some machinery connected with the bedstead, were suddenly whisked off you, and, if that did not result in inducing you to get up, the bed itself, which revolved on a pivot, turned over and shot you out. I was exceedingly pleased with this, but, at the same time, hoped that it might not come into general use, as I was not at all sure, in my own case, that operation No. 3 might not too frequently be applied. However, I need have had no fear on that score, as I do not think anybody ever saw or heard of that bed being brought into use outside the Exhibition.

The other objects that I saw, and which particularly dwell in my imagination, were a piece of sculpture, representing a boy with a broken drum in an agony of tears; a large model of the Castle of Rosenau, where the Prince Consort—then Prince Albert—was born, with a large number of groups of figures, some dancing, some witnessing certain sports and pastimes, all illustrating the celebration of the Prince's birthday; the Queen of Spain's jewels, which reminded me of a page from *The Arabian Nights*; a collection of wax figures, illustrative of the costumes and occupations of the people of Mexico; and the story of Reynard the Fox told in a series of animal groups most cleverly stuffed and set up by some one at Würtemberg. These were the recollections that I brought away with most distinctness so far as the interior of the building was

concerned. But I particularly remarked two objects outside the building, one being a gigantic statue of a full-accoutred knight on horseback, whom I learnt in after-years was Godfrey de Bouillon, and a monstrous erection, consisting of blocks of coal, the intent of which was to give an idea of the output in this country.

There was nothing that impressed itself on my memory in the way of eating and drinking whilst we were in the building, but amends for this were made later on. When we had seen as much of the Exhibition as our little party deemed desirable, my father proposed that we should refresh exhausted nature by a visit to a notable establishment close by. Nearly opposite the Exhibition was Gore House, famous as the abode up to a year or two previously of the "most gorgeous Lady Blessington," social queen and literary star within a limited sphere. There, in conjunction with Count D'Orsay, "the last of the Dandies," she held those notable receptions, which attracted all the fashionables in literature, science and art, as well as the leading male aristocrats of the period. Her brilliant reign lasted till the summer of 1849, when the length of the financial tether of herself and the Count was reached, and the pair had to seek refuge abroad from their creditors. I have among my autographs a relic of her ladyship's impecunious period in the shape of a letter from her expressing her inability to satisfy the claims of a creditor, but promising a payment later on, whilst I have a letter from the Count to keep it in countenance. The house and extensive grounds after the flitting passed into the occupation of Alexis Soyer, the cook of the Reform Club, who enjoyed a European reputation for his gastronomic talents. He was at the very head of his profession, not Francatelli even being his superior, and he had sufficient literary ability to write several books relating to his art.

He opened Gore House as a hotel and restaurant, under the imposing designation of "Soyer's Symposium of all Nations." Hither we bent our steps. Money had been lavishly spent upon the property with a view to attracting the thousands of visitors flocking to the Exhibition, and certainly Soyer displayed no little enterprise and ingenuity

in devising means to secure popular support. The principal rooms, over which we were shown by a guide, who rattled off a description of what we ought to observe, were named after various countries, and were fitted, furnished, and decorated to represent different nationalities, so that when you engaged a room for feasting purposes you specified the particular quarter of the globe in which you felt you could eat in most comfort. Possibly you were served with the dishes most esteemed in the land you selected, but I cannot answer for this, as my parents were much too careful to dream of engaging a special room for refreshment purposes, however great its attractiveness. Only two of the rooms definitely impressed themselves upon my memory: the one designated "Italy" and the other "The Polar Regions." The characteristic of the decoration of the former was brightness and warmth, whilst wall-frescoes represented the Italian lakes with their bluest of waters and their sunniest of skies. The other room almost made one shiver, an Arctic winter being so realistically depicted in it. On every side ice and snow met the eye, and your wants could be ministered to 'neath an iceberg quite like the real thing, barring temperature. The final touch completing the verisimilitude of the whole was supplied by a very fine Polar Bear, so fiercely natural that I had to receive confident assurances that it was dead enough to be stuffed before I ventured near it.

On passing down the grand staircase, our attention was directed to a remarkable comic panoramic fresco designed and executed by the versatile George Augustus Sala, afterwards a recognized prince of journalists. It depicted the various nations of the world, and many of its most famous personages, with big heads and small bodies, mounted on divers kinds of animals, hastening to the Exhibition. It was of considerable length, as was necessary in view of its representative character, and it occupied the adjoining wall-space for the whole length of the staircase.

After inspecting the interior of the mansion, we betook ourselves to the extensive grounds in which it stood. Here fountains, temples, grottos, statuary and other adornments of which I had only read in books greatly impressed

my childish imagination. As we were enjoying all these agreeable features, a gentleman approached us who recognized my father, and after they had exchanged greetings my father turned to me and said :

“And now you shall be presented to the great Soyer.”

With that I was brought forward, and making my best bow shook hands with the distinguished Professor of Gastronomy, who favoured me with an ingratiating smile to my great content. I can see him now, a quite *distingué*-looking man wearing a large grey felt sombrero, which in the position it was worn formed an effective background to a rather striking countenance. I should have known the wearer anywhere on account of my familiarity with his portrait on the Soyer sauce-bottles of that day.

At the extreme end of the grounds were a number of cosy alcoves, similar to those at Vauxhall and Cremorne, where light refreshments were served, and adjoining them was a large building styled “The Hall of all Nations,” and here more substantial meals were procurable. As feeding-time approached, a band in the costume of the Ancient Order of Foresters marched, playing, through the grounds to the aforesaid hall, as a hint to the visitors that the moment was propitious for satisfying the cravings of the inner man. The little party of which I was a small item took the hint. Having done so, we found ourselves in a very large and profusely decorated hall of the baronial type. I have good reason to remember what I was given to eat, which was cold chicken and ham. Unfortunately, I allowed my mind to wander from my plate, distracted by the intense novelty of the scene and the alluring strains of the Foresters’ Band, and I had scarcely had a mouthful before my portion of chicken was suddenly whisked away, and the last I saw of it was when it was disappearing round the corner in the custody of a waiter. The waiter’s dexterity added to the gaiety of all except myself, to whom the joke less forcibly appealed. The extent of the sympathy I received was represented by the tendering of a recommendation not to look about me at meal-times.

My meal having come to an abrupt termination, there was no occasion to apply this well-meant advice at the

moment, so I cast my eyes round to see if any one else had a similar experience to my own. I had not long to wait. A little old gentleman alongside me allowed his glance to wander for a moment from his plate. The ever-watchful waiter had been stalking his prey, and having marked the best part of a wing as his own, with glittering eye, suddenly swooped down upon it. But, perhaps forewarned by my fate, the little old gentleman was too quick for the would-be appropriator of other folk's victuals. As the latter's thumb and forefinger touched the plate a knife descended in a flash within a hair's breadth of the aforesaid thumb, which was equally rapid in its movement when the danger was perceived. At the same moment the little old gentleman, looking up into the eyes of the horrified plate-snatcher, quietly remarked, in the dulcet tones of a sincere well-wisher :

"Don't do that again. You had a lucky escape. I nearly had the top of your thumb off."

This little incident, coupled with the expressive dismay and rapid exit of the despoiler of my dinner, afforded me unbounded satisfaction. It is not always that Nemesis follows so close upon an offender's track. If it was not, in a literal sense, getting a bit of one's own back, it was very consolatory to think that the abductor of my food had endured the pang of feeling that he had nearly lost a bit of his own anatomy which was worth considerably more to him than the bit of chicken for which he risked it. His manual dexterity led us to believe that he must have had considerable practice in the art of food appropriation, and probably this was his first unsuccessful *coup*. Possibly he had no other means of obtaining food—without paying for it.

Soyer did not reap a financial reward for his Gore House enterprise, but, on the contrary, lost most of his previous savings—a considerable amount. His venture, while it attracted the public, was on too lavish a scale to admit of profits. He had previously entered the service of the State, having been sent in 1847 to Ireland by the Government in order to control the public kitchens established there during the great famine. The Government took

advantage of his knowledge and experience again during the war in the Crimea, whither he was despatched, and it was recognized that he rendered very essential service in ameliorating the condition, in a culinary point of view, of the Army. He also prepared a new dietary for military hospitals as well as for Government emigrants, both of which were adopted by the authorities. So he was a man quite worth shaking hands with.

Up to this point in the day's doings my memory is clear as to my happenings, but I can remember nothing of what transpired after the waiter's discomfiture. I reached home again somehow, but all recollection of the journey has gone from me. Possibly my mind had taken in all it could hold at one go ; possibly the immediately succeeding hours were not sufficiently eventful to justify the brain in going out of its way to trouble about them ; possibly, most probably, worn out by the day's excitements, I surrendered myself to slumber as soon as ever I had the chance. Young as I was, I think my parents did well by me in giving me this day's jaunt. Whilst it helped to expand my mind, it has, in addition, provided me in my old age with some recollections with which I would not willingly part. Beyond this, it is a pleasure to think that one was privileged to see with one's own eyes that pioneer and most historic of all exhibitions which glistened in the sunshine of Hyde Park. Its influence upon the arts, commerce, and industry of the nation was abounding and far-reaching, and it made for good in a thousand different ways. And to "Albert, the good," more than to any one else, must be given the credit of calling it into existence. Later on I journeyed on my own account to the next London Exhibition, in 1862, and I have attended nearly every metropolitan exhibition held since, as well as others abroad and in the provinces. But I suppose in later years my mind was less plastic than it was in childhood, for nothing on these exhibition days stands out in memory with the vividness that characterizes the incidents I have just narrated.

Nearly fifty years afterwards, when in the company of an old born-and-bred Londoner, who had also attended the Great Exhibition, I tested my memory by pointing

out to him without any previous directions the exact position the Exhibition occupied, and I ascertained this by picturing in my mind the road by which we reached it long years before.

There was an incident in connection with the Exhibition which had a distinct fascination for me. Among the visitors to the Exhibition was an old Cornish woman, eighty-four years of age, who tramped all the way from Penzance, nearly 300 miles, in order to visit it. It took her five weeks to accomplish her self-imposed task, but she did it, and achieved a certain amount of fame at the same time, for the Queen, when visiting the Exhibition, spoke kindly to the old lady, to the latter's great delight, whilst the Lord Mayor received her at the Mansion House and presented her with a sovereign, which enabled her to return home by train. I was so greatly interested in all this that my father presented me with one of Darton's sixpenny toy-books, with very highly-coloured illustrations, depicting this undaunted representative of the duchy bidding farewell to her cat as she set forth, and also picturing some of her adventures on the way. This helped to impress the episode on my memory, and so I have brought the old lady once more into the light of day as one of the waifs and strays remaining in the by-ways of my recollection.

It will probably be inferred from these reminiscences that I saw somewhat more of the world and its pleasures than falls to the lot of most children. This was due not to any merits of my own but simply to the fact that, rightly or wrongly, my parents put me in the way of seeing everything that was to be seen, so far as they could compass it. Two years after my visit to the 1851 Exhibition, I passed through the metropolis on my way to Sydenham, where the palace of glass had been re-erected. It had not long previously been reopened there by the Queen, and so I saw it in all its pristine freshness. My parents, at any rate, exercised a wise discretion in permitting me this pleasure, for it opened up my mind in a way which was far-reaching in its effects and provided me with new lines of thought. Digby Wyatt and Owen Jones had brought

into being those, to me, wondrous reproductions of the dwellings and temples of bygone peoples, and I wandered in a state of ecstasy through the courts illustrative of Egypt, Nineveh, Greece, the Alhambra and Rome, with Pompeii thrown in with the latter, and then passed on to the later Byzantine and Mediæval periods. It was all a revelation, which, in the incentive it was to learn more about such things, was education in its best form, for it made me think, as well as stimulated my curiosity, in a right direction.

Then we went into the grounds, and saw grouped, around the lakes, the terrible antediluvian monsters reconstructed in stone by Waterhouse Hawkins from the data afforded by geological research. This gave me a much better understanding of the stream of life upon the globe than ever I had had before, whilst the ethnological groups in the palace itself showed me what strange peoples were still inhabiting our planet. It was a veritable fairy-land in its variety and charm, and helped me to see visions and dream dreams for years afterwards. Ever since that, to me, eventful Sydenham day, I have made a pilgrimage to the old shrine whenever I could—and that has been many times—happy to renew such cherished associations. Since my first visit, the old palace has passed through many vicissitudes, and I have marked with melancholy its gradual decadence. So I was glad to offer my small mite towards the fund proposed a few years ago to be raised towards its purchase and restoration. At the present moment, “the temple of peace,” as it was originally called, is fulfilling a worthy purpose in sheltering the men who go forth to fight our battles. I live in great hopes that, when the blessings of peace are once more restored to us, the palace may again fulfil the hopes and aspirations of its original promoters, and once more become the great educational medium they intended it to be.

There is but one step from the sublime to the ridiculous, and, 'midst the elevating thoughts which that day gave rise to, there stands out in all its vividness a comic fright I had. On the way, in a four-wheeler through the streets of London to the station, owing to a block, our vehicle halted

alongside a similar one with a horse whose bump of curiosity was abnormally developed, for it put its head right through the open window of our conveyance, with a view apparently of ascertaining who was occupying it. As this sudden apparition, with its great shining teeth and breathing nostrils, crossed my line of vision, I was terrified beyond expression, for it seemed as if one of the antediluvian monsters from Sydenham had assumed life and come to wreak its vengeance on me. I had the presence of mind to slip off the seat on to the floor, where I was not so come-at-able, and by this time the animal, having seen all it wanted, withdrew itself, though not without some strong remonstrance from its driver upon the impropriety of its conduct. I mention this small incident for the benefit of grown-up people who are very apt to imagine that children's minds are only sieve-like in their retentive power. As the frogs said to the stone-thrower, "What is sport to you is death to us," and what may be pure comedy to an elder sometimes appears deep tragedy to a youngster.

Railways and sight-seeing are so closely united that a brief reference to the former may very well follow the account of my two journeys to town. Railways were, of course, well established before I came into existence, but there were certain parts of the kingdom not linked up with the rest, so I arrived upon the scene just in time to have a stage-coach ride, owing to a portion of the line connecting two important towns not being completed. While steam was the motive power for the start and finish of the journey, we had to rely upon horses for the intermediate stage. I remember, when in the train before it started, being perturbed by the noise the porters made just above our heads in arranging the luggage on the roof of the carriage, for then there was no luggage van, the passengers' impedimenta being disposed of as on the old stage-coach. But not every one took kindly at first to steam-locomotion. Dr. Routh, the President of Magdalen College, who did not die until ten years after I was born, was so opposed to the introduction of railways that he declined to take any official cognizance of their existence. On one occasion, in 1850, a tutor of the college reported to him that a certain



#### JUPITER AND HIS SATELLITES

When, in 1864, the G.W.R. Co. proposed to move their carriage and locomotive works from Swindon to Oxford, the University strongly opposed the proposal, whilst the City warmly approved of it. The caricature represents the late Mr. Goldwin Smith, then Regius Professor of Modern History at Oxford, who was the leader of the opposition in Convocation, in the press and elsewhere, surrounded by his satellites, hurling his thunderbolts against the scheme. Below this, the figure on the left represents the late J. E. T. Rogers, Professor of Political Economy at Oxford and afterwards M.P. for Southwark, and that on the right the late Alderman James Hughes, a member of the Oxford City Corporation, both of whom were supporters of the proposal, which never materialised.

(Reproduced from a lithographed pen-and-ink drawing by the late Harry Sanders, an Oxford artist)



undergraduate, residing in Suffolk, had not come up for term until some days after the appointed time.

"I suppose, sir," said the tutor, "you will send him down?"

"Ah, sir," remarked the old man thoughtfully, "the roads in Suffolk—the roads, sir—are very bad at this time of year."

"But, Mr. President," replied the tutor, "he didn't come by road."

Catching at the last word, the doctor went on :

"The roads, sir, the roads in winter, I do assure you, sir, are very bad for travelling."

"But," urged the tutor, in despair, "he didn't come by the *road*, sir, he came by *rail*."

"Eh, sir," gasped the doctor, at last aroused, "*what* did you say? I don't know anything about *that*!"

And he waved his hand to indicate that he could recognize nothing that was so far removed from his sphere of observation.

When railways were first introduced, the city was strongly in favour of Oxford directly participating in the advantages accruing from such means of communication. The University, on the other hand, was alarmed at such a proposition, and petitioned Parliament and used all its influence against it. The objections to the railway touching Oxford sound so comic nowadays that, although they are not matters of personal recollection, I may, perhaps, be excused from quoting them. They were, as set forth in the University petition, as follows :

Firstly. That the existing means of communication are fully adequate. (This was equivalent to saying that a stage-coach ought to be good enough for anybody.)

Secondly. That greater facilities for communication would be injurious to the discipline of the University.

Thirdly. That the works adjoining the river would cause floods by impeding the watercourse.

The University succeeded in temporarily staving off the dreaded innovation, for the line had for some time to stop short several miles from Oxford. But even the

University could not permanently isolate Oxford, although, by compelling the Great Western to make its junction at Didcot, instead of, as was intended, at Oxford, it has left, by the inconvenience it entails, enduring evidence of its past influence.

I have by me an autograph letter addressed by the Rev. D. H. Lee Warner, of Tiberton Court, Herefordshire, to William Gurdon, Esq., of The Temple, London, and it is interesting as illustrating the fear and distrust with which the advent of railways was regarded by many. It is dated December 9th, 1840, and runs as follows :

“ With regard to the railways, it is easy to foresee, unless they are plac’d under very different Regulations from those which at present preside over the movements along the lines ; unless a different Principle be established clearly defin’d and strictly observ’d as to the exact Time of starting and Rapidity of Motion ; unless Men of Respectability, well train’d and educated to the Work, be appointed as Engineers so as to secure comparative Safety to the Traveller, within half a century, they will only be recogniz’d by their Failure.

“ I always consider’d the Experiment doubtful as to the ultimate result, from the numberless Wheels, plac’d as it were within each other, any one of which giving way, endangers the whole of the Complicated Machine ; but I confess I did not calculate upon the dreadful Loss of Life and Limb, which each succeeding Week reports, and which has excited such a degree of Alarm in the public mind as will not soon subside, and which already induces a Regret that the old mode of Locomotion should have been so prematurely abandon’d. Yet I willingly have added my Name to the respectable List which you sent me, and which I now return, and I have only to hope that ‘ God will speed and protect the Railway,’ and when carried to Norwich, that all the provincial advantages anticipated from its course may be realiz’d.”

Ruskin had no great love for railways. In *Modern Painters* he says :

“ All travelling becomes dull in exact proportion to its rapidity. Going by railroad I do not consider as

travelling at all ; it is merely ' being sent ' to a place, and very little different from becoming a parcel."

In some previous reminiscences I alluded to my having enjoyed the friendship of a notable old whip in the days when the horns of "The Age," "The Royal William," "The Old Blenheim" and "The Rocket" made the welkin ring before the inharmonious shriek of the steam engine rent the air. At the risk of repeating myself, I will recall my recollections of Joe Tollit, one of the last and most notable of the old professional whips, because they seem to form a fitting pendant to my early experiences of railways. In conjunction with three of his brothers, he horsed the well-known "Oxford Age" coach, and drove it himself. It started from the Vine Hotel—an old-fashioned hostelry in the High Street, Oxford, which I can just remember, though it has long since disappeared—its destination being the *Bell and Crown*, Holborn. The distance, fifty-two miles, was usually covered in about five and a half hours, but on one notable occasion Tollit did it in three hours and forty minutes. I had heard of this exploit from other sources, and one day I obtained particulars from the lips of the hero of it. Tollit, I may say, was by no means given to boasting of his own achievements, and, in fact, was so far quiet and reserved in a general way that you had to wait till he was in the vein if you wanted to talk about coaching. "The Age" was running in opposition to "The Royal William," and Snowden, the coachman of the latter, had expressed his intention of being in London on May Day, 1834, before Tollit. The latter, in telling me of the circumstances, said :

"I started as usual, at eleven o'clock, arrived at Wycombe two hours afterwards, and passed the clock at the Quebec Chapel in Oxford Street at 2.40, long before 'The Royal William' had been heard of. We left 'The Old Blenheim,' which started two hours earlier than we did, behind us at Gerrard's Cross, twenty miles from London. I asked a lady sitting just behind me if she felt alarmed at the pace, and she said : ' Oh no, I am only afraid that we shall arrive so long before our time that my friends will not be there to meet me.' As her fears, in this

respect, were realized, I sent her home in a 'growler' when we reached the *Bell and Crown*."

Tollit was a very cool as well as a daring whip, as the following incident, of which he also told me, will show. Once, when going down Dupree's Pitch, just after changing horses at Beaconsfield, one of the leaders began to kick, and got its leg over the inside trace. Tollit was asked if he wasn't going to pull up, and he replied: "No, not till I get to Gerrard's Cross, for if I do she will begin again." After putting matters right at Gerrard's Cross he drove the animal right through to London, and said that she never kicked again. Black Will, a well-known whip, who was sitting alongside Tollit at the time, remarked that he had driven for forty years, but would never have dared to do such a thing.

I do not know whether, as a coachman, Tollit went specially to see for himself what the new travelling competitor was like, but he was present at the opening of the first of the railways, viz. the Liverpool and Manchester, in 1830, when Huskisson, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, was run over by a locomotive and killed. I asked him what opinion he then formed as to the future of railways, and he told me he was perfectly satisfied, after his visit to Liverpool, that coaches were bound to be run off the road, but that horses would be as much wanted as ever. Acting upon this opinion, he some years afterwards relinquished his coach seat and set up as a livery stable keeper at Oxford.

He crops up two or three times in that most celebrated of Oxford novels, *Verdant Green*, notably as the possessor of the wonderful mare described by Mr. Bouncer as being "as easy as a chair, and jumps like a cat," which, with Verdant Green on her back, was to knock the favourite for the Brazenface Grind into a cocked hat.

Tollit retired from business a few years previous to his death, which occurred at a ripe old age, deservedly respected by all who knew him. I should much like to have heard his caustic comments on the advent of motors and aeroplanes, but he was saved the pang of knowing anything of either of these means towards the supersession of horses,

### CHAPTER III

My Soldiering Days—Fort Belan—School Drills—The Volunteers—The Hyde Park Review—The Humours of Volunteering—The Lasting Effects of the Movement.

**I**T is a far cry, as time goes, to the days when I went soldiering, and a still farther cry to those earlier days when the seed was sown of that martial ardour which led me later on to shoulder a Long Enfield in defence of King and Country.

Environment, as well as heredity, is responsible for a good deal in the lives of all of us, and, as my company was inflicted upon the world in the early forties, I was in time to hear stories of the great French War from the lips of those who lived when it was in full swing. My father could tell of the arrival of the news of the Battle of Waterloo, and my maternal grandfather had lived through the troubled period of the Peninsular War, and taken an absorbing interest in it, when Napoleon was the bugbear of Europe. The Emperor was expected to land upon our shores at any moment, and my grandparent, who lived at a seaport, was wont of a morning to go, with one or two cronies, with telescopes under their arms, to a certain point of the coast where they could best see "Boney come round the corner." One night, the whole town was roused by the news that "the corner" had been turned, and the rapid tramp of infantry, the rumbling of artillery-wheels and the clatter of cavalry roused the townsfolk from their slumbers, at least those who ventured to sleep in such stirring times. As there were heroes before Agamemnon, so there were "alarums and excursions" before the age of Zeppelins. But, in this instance, it was a false alarm, and the would-be invader was as far off as ever from compassing his purpose. When I recall my grandfather, whom I so well

remember, I seem to be brought very near those far-off days when Pitt called, and not in vain, upon the manhood of the nation to aid in its defence, either by personal service or by supplying the sinews of War. And then arises the solemn thought that one lives in greater and more momentous times still, but with the consoling reflection that the same Providence in which our forefathers trusted, and not in vain, during long and anxious years, is ruling our destinies now.

In such surroundings, it is not surprising that to my young mind Waterloo was, far and away, the greatest battle ever fought and Wellington the greatest hero that ever lived. I was never tired of picturing him waving his sword in one hand and his cocked-hat in the other, and crying "Up, Guards, and at 'em," and if any one had ever told me this was a pure myth I should have renounced his friendship at once and for ever. I felt real sorrow when the old Duke died, because I didn't see how we could possibly get on without him, and I took deep interest in my father's account of his funeral, at which he was present.

As a child and youth I always looked anxiously forward to some day actually treading the field of Waterloo. Later on in life my wish was gratified, and, in weather which corresponded to that experienced by the combatants—for it poured in torrents—I tramped over the hallowed ground, worshipping in particular at the shrine of Hugoumont.

Years afterwards, when on a yachting cruise off the coast of Wales, I was brought face to face with a remarkable and interesting relic of the days when there was a general expectation that Boney would suddenly swoop down upon us and land upon our shores at some vulnerable point. In view of this, George III. appealed to the aristocracy and gentry of the country to help provide for the national defence. The first Lord Newborough, who was colonel of the Carnarvon Militia, and a large landed proprietor in the county, responded to this appeal in a thoroughly patriotic spirit. He raised, equipped and maintained at his own expense a large body of troops, and built what was in the old gunnery days, a formidable fort overlooking the sea. Outside, it is protected by trenches and redoubts,

and inside, in the form of a large quadrangle, are barracks, mess-rooms, etc., provided for the accommodation of the Governor and a force of 400 men. The whole is surrounded by a moat, and has nearly 100 cannon still there for the defence. Most of such relics of an eventful past are usually allowed to fall into decay, but the successors of the patriotic nobleman have, with loving care, maintained the old fortress in perfect order, and, as there are no soldiers occupying the buildings, they are utilized for the housing of models of ships and many other naval objects of interest. It is known as Fort Belan, and no doubt would attract many visitors were it not in a very isolated situation "far from the madding crowd," and outside the track of the ordinary tourist. In fact, I have never seen any account of it in guide-books or elsewhere. It is, however, known to Royalty, and when the Princess Victoria was visiting the present owner at his residence in the neighbourhood, she was greatly interested in the old fort.

The patriotism of the fort-builder did not stop at defending the coast. Thinking that possibly the French might vanquish his men there, he had another fort constructed in his park about five miles off, so as, by offering further resistance, to delay the progress of the enemy. The same care which has preserved the sea-defence for the benefit of posterity has been meted out to the land-fortress, which is now fitted up as a Military Museum of arms, accoutrements, etc., representative of various periods and many countries. The weapons of war, some hundreds in number, date from the old cross-bow onwards. The late Lord Wolseley, when visiting the present owner, the Hon. F. G. Wynn, son of the 3rd Baron, at Glynllifon, the family mansion, spent many hours in this museum which interested him greatly. The two old fortresses eloquently testify how far removed are the methods of the past from those of to-day when war comes into the reckoning, and so may not perhaps be considered as beyond the scope of these resuscitations of old memories. I could write much, if it were not outside my main subject, of the many treasures of which Glynllifon, where I spent several happy days, was the repository. But as some further evidence of the regard shown for the

past, there is a building of considerable size attached to the mansion containing a remarkable collection of the various vehicles used by the family for generations past, dating back to the grand old family coaches of the highwaymen period, whilst in a spacious music-room, in which is a fine organ, is a delightful collection of musical instruments going back to Elizabethan days, for virginals, spinets and harpsichords all find a quiet resting-place there.

In 1854 the forty years' peace came to an end, and war was declared with Russia. At the school I went to, the ordinary playground games were abandoned, and we set to work to drill ourselves, our limited knowledge being derived from what we had picked up when seeing the evolutions of the Militia. We were impressed with the idea that we should all have to fight the Russians in the end and so had better be quick to learn how to do it. We had a Commander-in-Chief, in the person of the head boy of the school, but were at first sadly put to it for lack of a charger for him, for we knew the old Duke always led his troops on horseback. However, necessity being the mother of invention, we supplied the deficiency by persuading the biggest boy to take our chieftain on his back and trot about with him at the head of the column. Everybody had to provide himself with some weapon of warfare, toy-swords or wooden muskets for choice, and, as a varied collection of harmless implements for human slaughter, it would have been hard to beat. Our schoolmaster was sufficiently enterprising to realize that this demonstration of martial ardour might, if rightly directed, be turned to profitable account in connection with the school bills. So one day he appeared in the playground and expressed his intention of reviewing us. When we had gone through our evolutions, he addressed us in the usual manner of reviewing-officers, and concluded by saying he was so impressed by what he had seen that he would invite all our parents to be present at a grand field day, so that they might participate in the pleasure he had derived from the improving spectacle he had witnessed.

This was an official recognition which we greatly valued, and put fresh life into us. The field day was so

far successful that our fond parents adopted with enthusiasm a proposition of the master that he should secure the services of a military expert to drill us in accordance with Army rules and regulations. A capitation-fee paid for each pupil sufficiently recompensed our dominie for his happy thought and left him a reasonable margin of profit. An old Militia sergeant, who knew all about the Battle of Waterloo and how it was won, was the medium of instruction. I never could be quite clear whether or not he personally participated in the fight, but he was apparently quite as well informed about it as if he had. Possibly he was in the same position as George IV., who talked so often of what he did at Waterloo that at last he persuaded himself that he was actually there. At any rate, the sergeant knew enough to tell us, with considerable circumstantiality, that the battle never could have been won had it not been for the Militias, who at a most critical moment came to the rescue. All which we steadfastly believed. And thus I reached the first stage on the road to soldiering.

On the termination of the Crimean War we all gradually simmered down, and our martial ardour was for a time in a quiescent state, when it was suddenly roused into action by fears of an invasion by "a neighbour just over the way," with whom, happily, at the present time we are on the best of terms. So the Volunteers sprang into existence for the defence of their native land. My father was always a "fighting man," but, for want of a common enemy, had hitherto to content himself with verbal and written pepperings of his political adversaries. When, however, there was a chance of putting real powder and ball into the bodies of his country's foes he promptly took advantage of it and joined the ranks, his zeal and enthusiasm being afterwards rewarded by his promotion to the position of quartermaster-sergeant. But his duties in this position were not sufficiently arduous as to monopolize all his energies in such directions, so he devoted himself to the formation of a Cadet Corps, open to all the boys in the city. It is almost unnecessary to say that I was one of the first enrolled, and so I reached the second stage in my semi-military career. The movement made rapid headway,

and, as soon as its success was assured, we got into uniforms, similar to those of the battalion to which we were attached, and obtained official recognition. Then the War Office graciously permitted us to purchase of them a supply of old cavalry carbines, being a weapon of an entirely obsolete type, and after that we felt equal to anything. My father was gazetted as the commandant of the corps, and very proud he was of us. The drill we underwent was not only an admirable preparation for admission into the Volunteers but furnished an excellent training in other respects. It impressed upon us the value of discipline, orderliness, and unity of action, as well as fostering that feeling of loyalty and patriotism which, from time immemorial, has been the distinguishing characteristic of every true Englishman. The recollection of my indebtedness, moral and physical, to this early introduction to some of the aspects of soldiering may sufficiently account for my advocacy of Cadet Corps in connection with our Public, Secondary and other Schools.

As soon as I was old enough I was drafted into the Volunteers, not as a raw recruit, but as having a knowledge, from practical experience, of much that was required of me, which was a considerable relief to the drill sergeants. Thus did I reach the third and final stage of my soldiering ambition in the days when the old muzzle-loader was our weapon and "Form, form, Riflemen form" was our marching song.

It was in 1859 that the alarm was sounded that called a nation of shopkeepers to arms, but my age prevented my own enrolment until the early sixties. However, I was cognizant of every phase of the movement from the very start, as my father kept me well posted up in it, while, as a member of the Cadet Corps attached to the battalion, I could fully understand and appreciate the drift of things. Under these circumstances, I regard myself as part and parcel of the movement from its inception, and shall write as such.

Though we hailed with enthusiasm the idea of fighting for our country, our knowledge of rifles was a negligible quantity, whilst we were so unused to the term "corps"

that at the outset we were not all in agreement as to its pronounciation. Some, blissfully oblivious of its foreign antecedents, took orthography as their guide, which, with its usual treachery, landed them in a quagmire. Hence, there was some risk of a confusion of ideas when our spokesman earnestly appealed to the Town Council to support the movement on the ground that "War threatens, and we must have a *corpse* to guard our native shores." The expression of a hope, from the back benches, that no councillor would be called upon to supply this want in his own person, led to explanations, which not only determined any existing doubts as to whether the living or the dead were to be the defending force but also, once and for all, straightened things up in the matter of pronounciation.

There was, at first, a prevailing impression—which was carefully fostered by the regulars—that we were only "playing at soldiers," and we were certainly not generally credited with the grim earnestness which carried the movement on to its jubilee. In our early stages there is no doubt we had much, from a strictly military point of view, to answer for, many of our proceedings being not at all in accordance with the "way we have in the army." We were not to the manner born, and martial habits and discipline were not to be attained all in a moment. But we were willing to be taught, as the result testifies, and the one or two incidents I have to relate, and of which I had personal acquaintance, may help to show, by way of contrast, how much the force has learnt since the days referred to.

It did not take long to enrol sufficient of our townsfolk to form two companies, and then a little difficulty arose, for, owing to a general desire to be as much to the front as possible, everybody expressed a preference for No. 1 Company. This appeared likely to lead to complications, but a satisfactory solution was arrived at. The Enfield—of which there were two types, the long and the short—was the rifle then in use by the Volunteers, and it was settled that those who had the short, which was the best as well as the lightest weapon, should go into No. 1 Company, and those who had the long into No. 2 and following Companies.

There was more in this than appeared on the surface, inasmuch as you could only obtain a short Enfield by purchasing it out of your own pocket, whereas the Government would lend you a long one free of charge. The automatic neatness of this process of selection stifled complaint, and at once reduced the number of aspirants to a front place to manageable dimensions. As usual in this world, those who were ready to pay for the privilege took precedence, and as they were willing to spend, as well as be spent, in the service of their country, no one could reasonably begrudge them the chance of a first shot at the enemy. They were mostly senior in age to those of us, who, having more enthusiasm than cash, were absorbed into No. 2 Company, so we comforted ourselves with the reflection that we had the advantage of youth, if not of affluence, on our side. We had further consolation later on, when we found we could, in the argot of the butts, "wipe their eye" when it came to putting bullets on the target. Verily, life is full of compensations!

The Volunteers themselves had very little voice in matters affecting the internal economy of the force. The ruling authority, who settled most things for us, was the Lord-Lieutenant of the County, and he was not accustomed to take us much into his confidence. He was paramount, whether as regarded the officers to reign over us—for the nomination rested entirely with him—or the cut and colour of our uniforms. Bankers for choice, and next lawyers and doctors, with occasionally a brewer, if he were in a large way, were the *materiel* from which his lordship mainly made his selection of holders of commissions, and I must admit that this resulted in our getting some very good officers.

Volunteers had to find their own uniforms, but those who paid the piper, or, rather the tailor, did not choose the cloth. When what we were to wear had to be settled, his lordship appointed a committee of county magnates to go into the question. The collective wisdom of this body ordained that our corps should wear a tunic and trousers of a dirty drab colour, with facings of a similar hue, only "drabbier," and cap to match. The latter was

a poor, weak, limp thing, that after a little wear became top-heavy and drooped in a most lackadaisical way. The committee of *taste*, as we ironically styled them, had not to don these garments themselves, or the result of their deliberations might have been different. There was a suspicion amongst us that the deputy-lieutenants on the committee were unduly anxious that nothing should be selected of a character likely to induce the public to "yield to its glamour at once," and thereby tend to distract attention from the brilliancy of their own uniforms. This supposition may, or may not, have been correct, but, if it were, the end might have been compassed, we thought, without putting us into garments so unpleasantly suggestive of sackcloth, if not of ashes.

We soon achieved an unenviable notoriety as the worst-dressed corps to be seen outside our own county. At the first review we attended away from home, the populace promptly found an appropriate sobriquet for us. As we marched through the streets a bystander, impressed—certainly not favourably—by our appearance, called out :

"Whoever be *you* ? "

A woman in the crowd, with quick appreciation, responded :

"Oh, they be the work'us boys ! "

The description was recognized as so appropriate that it adhered to us at once, and became our natural designation. We sent in a round robin to the committee of taste, earnestly praying for a modification in the matter of facings at least, but they were as fearful of bright colours as the veriest Puritans, and were not to be moved. They said that ours was a capital working uniform that wouldn't show dirt—it certainly couldn't, for that was its natural colour—and wouldn't be a good mark for the enemy, and what could we wish for more ? Still, we were not happy. We felt that we would far rather run the uncertain risk of being riddled by foemen's bullets than remain a certain target for the shafts of wit of our own countrymen. Some years afterwards when our uniforms, from the effects of hard wear, were less presentable than ever we obtained a modicum of relief in the shape of a cloth more nearly

approximating to grey with some red braid to relieve it, whilst we were graciously permitted to stiffen our caps and stick a red woollen ball on the top thereof. These were regarded as great concessions.

It must be borne in mind that I am expressing what were our feelings nearly sixty years ago, before the South African War had remodelled our ideas with respect to military habiliments as well as many other army matters. We have outgrown the days when we discussed uniforms from an æsthetic rather than a utilitarian point of view, and, under these circumstances, I am now inclined to think that our County Committee were only a little in advance of their time.

But there is a silvery lining to every cloud; even Pandora's box yielded one consolation, and we had ours in the days of which I am writing. Though the aforesaid county magnates could control the cut and colour of *our* uniforms, we could dress our band as we liked—and we did. In fact, we took the fullest possible advantage of this latitude by arraying them in garments which, for conspicuousness, it would be difficult to surpass. We encased them in bright cherry-red coloured trousers, cut *à la* peg-top, and a virgin white tunic, profusely braided to match the nether habiliments, whilst a white shako adorned with more braid and a scarlet plume was our crowning achievement. The effect was dazzling in the extreme, and the crowd, who found so appropriate a designation for ourselves, soon discovered something equally suitable for our band, who were forthwith dubbed “the *cherrybims*”—with the substitution of another vowel for the one in the last syllable.

“A thing of beauty is a joy for ever”—and we were exceedingly proud of our band, who gratified both our aural and visual senses, especially the latter. Their presence at our head afforded, to our minds at least, conclusive evidence that, if the powers by whom we ourselves were attired knew naught of taste in dress, *we*, at any rate, possessed the true æsthetic faculty.

We saw a fine opportunity for advertising ourselves in this respect when we were granted permission to take part



#### VULCAN FALLEN AND CRIPPLED

The illustration represents Jove, personified by the then Vice-Chancellor (Rev. Dr. Lightfoot, Rector of Exeter Coll.) as having just ejected Vulcan, as the British Artizan from Olympus, otherwise the precincts of the University  
 (Reproduced, by permission of Mr. H. Giles, of 23 Broad St., Oxford, from a pen-&-ink sketch)



in a Volunteer Review by the Queen in Hyde Park. In the innocence of our hearts, we were under the impression that, whatever we did and wherever we went on that eventful day, our band would be always at our head on the full play to the delight of all around, the Queen and ourselves included. Up to a certain point our expectations in this respect were well on the road to realization, for we marched through London streets, full of our conscious might, to the loudest strains our bandmaster could extract from his men. On taking up the position assigned to us in the Park, however, we had a rude awakening from the sweet content that possessed us. To our intense surprise and disgust, the colonel in charge of the battalion of which we formed a part coolly ordered our band off, informing them that their further services would not be required at present. Our own colonel, an old cavalryman who had delayed his study of infantry tactics until somewhat late in life, being well aware of our feelings on the subject, made some demur to parting with our sheet-anchor. On inquiring where the band was to go to he was emphatically told :

“To the devil, sir, if you like, as long as they’re out of the way!”

This was conclusive, so off they went, with a parting injunction from some of us not to move too far off, as we couldn’t do without ’em for the March Past. We had thoroughly rehearsed this latter proceeding, and flattered ourselves that, when we had our own *particular* tune played by our own *particular* band, we were hard to beat. But a fresh and bitter disappointment awaited us, for when the time arrived for the March Past, and we requested that our band might be sent for, we were curtly told that we were to be played past Her Majesty by the massed bands of the Household Brigade. This was a regular knock-down blow, but, as the authorities showed no disposition to make a special exception in our favour, and our own colonel was of the opinion that acquiescence was the only course open to us, we made a virtue of necessity, and submitted with as good a grace as we could muster. We put our best feet foremost, but we felt that, with a strange

band playing a strange tune, we were heavily handicapped. It was, indeed, a hard matter for some of us to keep good step without the familiar "whack" of our own drummer to guide us. Our disappointment did not, however, prevent our joining with heart and voice in the final and most striking feature of the day. After we had saluted Her Most Gracious Majesty in military fashion, we all had licence to do what we had long been yearning for, viz. to show our loyalty in the good old English way, free from martial trammels. At the official signal-cry, "The Queen," every cap was off, and a mighty shout went up from the throats of 20,000 Volunteers. The spectators in their thousands were not slow to join in, and the pent-up enthusiasm of a great day in British Annals found a glorious vent. This brought down the curtain upon a most stirring spectacle.

After this truly dramatic incident, the vast audience began to disperse, and the actors to follow suit. Then, on a smaller stage, the comedy element came into play again. To our great relief, our band once more effected a junction with us, and we were preparing to make an effective departure to the music of its soul-inspiring strains, when the chieftain who had played havoc with us before rode up and ordered *our* band to the front of the battalion of which we were one of the hindmost companies, the intention being to remove the battalion in one body from the Park to the departure line of rail. This was veritably the last straw. Flesh and blood could not stand this, and we promptly conveyed to our own colonel that not for all the military "bosses" in creation were we going to budge an inch except close behind our own music. Our colonel was not the man to jeopardize his local popularity by making himself a party to any further attempts, as we regarded them, to lower our *prestige*, more especially to oblige some one whom he had never seen before, and might never see again. Therefore, as pleasantly as he could, he explained our views to the authority on horseback. The latter gave us the full benefit of his opinion upon our conduct, in language which for force and directness left absolutely nothing to be desired. But he might as well have railed

at the Rock of Gibraltar for any effect it had. Ultimately he rode off with the parting shot that we might get out of the — place as best we could, and probably we should be there all night! This did not in the least disconcert us. We were in no particular hurry, and when we saw our opportunity we slipped on to the line of march and, headed by our band playing with might and main, strode triumphantly out of the Park, full of a deep sense of the honour and glory necessarily attaching to any corps that could boast of musicians so strikingly costumed. Although we did not arrive home till a late hour of the night, our fellow-townfolk were awaiting us, and we were escorted through the streets by a cheering multitude as though we were conquering heroes returning from a hard-fought campaign. And, in truth, we felt very much as though we were.

Our proceedings at the next important review we attended indicated that we had still something to learn with respect to military manners and customs. A town in the Midland Counties was the rendezvous, and a large number of corps assembled for inspection by the Commander-in-Chief himself. Volley and file firing were included in the programme; and a bountiful supply of blank cartridges were served out to us. Had our superiors been less lavish in this respect, all might have been well—which it was not. We acquitted ourselves very satisfactorily up to the moment when the Duke concluded the customary speech at the finish, congratulating us upon our soldierly qualities and the country upon possessing such a well-disciplined defensive force, etc., etc. We were very pleased with ourselves and also with the Duke, for he conveyed his sense of our merits in no half-hearted terms. We had never been spoken to so nicely before, and we bethought ourselves how, as *he* had so generously testified his approval of *us*, *we* could express our appreciation of *him*. Our natural impulse was to give him three cheers and musical honours, but we knew enough of military discipline to be aware that this was not customary on parade except, perhaps, under very special circumstances. A brilliant idea, as we thought it, flashed upon us. We had plenty of ammunition

left, why not treat him to something in the nature of a *feu de joie* or Royal salute? *This*, at least, was in accordance with military and naval practice—alas, a *little* knowledge is a dangerous thing!

It was no sooner thought of than done, and at it we went, hammer and tongs. The idea "caught on" directly, and spread quickly, so that in less than no time we were all firing off blank cartridges as though dear life depended upon it. Some endeavoured to excuse themselves afterwards by declaring that they followed our example under the impression that we were acting under orders, but this was a mere subterfuge. His Royal Highness, who was riding off the ground with his staff, was arrested in his departure by this sudden expenditure of gunpowder. We anticipated that he was returning in order to make his acknowledgments, but the expression upon the Commander-in-Chief's countenance, when we could discern it through the smoke, was certainly not indicative of this as he faced us. Meanwhile, officers ran and galloped up and down, and amid the din besought us, in the pantomime of despair, to desist, whilst the language of the adjutants must have been simply blood-curdling, if we could have heard it. We soon realized that somebody or something had gone wrong, and when the Duke could open his mouth without being choked with gunpowder, we were left in no uncertainty as to who or what it was. It was *ourselves*! His Royal Highness, who, to put it mildly, was boiling over, and looked it, assured us, with an emphasis that precluded all doubt as to his sincerity, that *never*, in the whole course of his experience, had he witnessed such a disgraceful exhibition, or anything more unsoldierlike. After which there was a great calm, and not so much as a pop-gun broke the stillness, as the Commander-in-Chief left us to the tender mercies of our respective adjutants!

So our pretty compliment, as until too late we imagined it, with its added grace of spontaneity, was but a fiasco after all. We didn't realize the enormity of our guilt then—although I can do so now—and regarded ourselves more in the light of injured innocents, and the Duke as very hard to please. Our adjutant certainly did his level best

to bring the heinousness of our offence home to us. We thought the Duke severe, but he was complimentary in comparison with the adjutant!

The colonel always had the corps at his back in putting down anything like premeditated insubordination, as occurred once on our way to camp. Contrary to orders, two of our men detrained for refreshment purposes, and greatly aggravated their offence by open defiance of the colonel. The latter bided his time, and, having got us safely into camp, ordered the pair to be put under arrest for the week. It did not then take long to bring conviction home to their minds that it was an error of judgment, to say the least, to attempt to sit upon your commanding officer when he had a Mutiny Act to fall back upon, and knew it. To any one with a decided hankering after, what may be termed, conspicuous isolation, a week under arrest may be a very enjoyable experience, but not otherwise. Your social circle is strictly limited to the sentries mounting guard over you, who are not supposed to encourage you in conversation, whilst the area of your movements is rigorously confined to daily exercise in custody within a very circumscribed area. This could not be said to represent what the volunteer mind generally understood as having "a real good time in camp." However, all, except perhaps the backsliders themselves, agreed that as a strict limitation of liquid refreshment formed part of the penalty, the colonel had made "the punishment fit the crime" in more respects than one.

Our adjutant was one of the old type with a vocabulary equal to any emergency; in fact, for wealth of invective and oburgation he would be difficult to surpass, and I was sometimes an unwitting cause of provoking a special display of his talents in this respect. The happy users to-day of the convenient breech-loaders wot not of the extra risk and trouble incidental to the old muzzle-loader. There was the harassing business of extracting your rod from its socket and ramming your charge home when you were all of a hurry. Now the adjutant expected me, when out skirmishing, satisfactorily to accomplish this feat whilst I was at top speed in pursuit of the imaginary enemy. My

inability to meet his wishes in this respect was the provocative cause of the language referred to. He would follow up close behind and discharge his linguistic shot and shell at me from the elevation of his charger. One of the worst accidents I remember in connection with the force had to do with both the ramrod and the adjutant. There was always a liability, not by any means a distant one, that, in a moment of forgetfulness, or excited distraction, you might omit to withdraw your rod from the barrel previous to a discharge of blank cartridge. This was the case on a skirmishing day with one of us—not me—and, strange to say, that ramrod, as soon as it emerged from where it had been inadvertently left, made straight for the adjutant, who promptly fell off his horse at its approach.

Another little contretemps, much to be regretted for its after-effects, took place when we were marching in double line in close formation with rifles—supposed to be—at half-cock and with a blank cartridge charge. A rear rank man most unfortunately had his rifle at full-cock, and, something or other releasing the spring, the cartridge and contents were poured at close quarters into the hinder parts of the front rank man, who naturally greatly resented it. The worst of it was that both of the individuals concerned were brother tailors, which gave rise to unkind suggestions having no real foundation in fact.

I remember an amusing instance of a failure to appreciate sufficiently the conditions necessary to be observed on parade. An Irishman, whom I knew, was enrolled as a Volunteer just previous to the holding of a full-dress parade. He was a raw recruit, without any previous acquaintance with drill, and he thought the sooner he made up for this deficiency the better, and that the parade was just the opportunity for improving his knowledge. The only difficulty that presented itself to him was the lack of a uniform, which he had not had time to procure. So he came to my father in hot haste to beg the loan of one of his two uniforms. My father, seeing that the applicant was almost as broad as he himself was long, offered a preliminary objection that the same uniform couldn't possibly fit both. The recruit, however, regarded this as

a very trivial excuse for not acceding to his wish, and met it with the reply that if *he* himself didn't mind the fit, nobody else need. My father then suggested that some knowledge of drill was regarded as necessary before appearing on parade. Nothing daunted, the Irishman urged that he could pick that up as he went along. Finally my father objected that a recruit couldn't possibly appear on parade in the regulation suit of a quartermaster-sergeant. This the Irishman, who would have been equally ready to put on a Field-Marshal's uniform, regarded as the feeblest attempt of all to avoid the loan, so he replied :

"Shure, they're never so moighty pertickler as all that. Besides they'd never notice it, so gimme the clothes."

I need hardly say that he did not get them, and, in my mind's eye, I can see O'Malley's sad countenance, set in a brilliant framework of fiery-red whiskers joining up with the hair of his head to match, as, with melancholy regret at the frustration of his hopes and a very poor opinion of a brother-in-arms who was so punctilious, he turned from our doorway.

O'Malley was happily saved from himself in a matter of costume, but a certain captain in a corps, other than ours, was not so fortunate. Having dressed for parade, so far as tunic and trousers were concerned, and, being of a shy and retiring nature, he arrayed himself in his ordinary overcoat to conceal his uniform. Unfortunately, his tall go-to-office hat was on the same hall stand, and, by force of habit and in a moment of aberration, he clapped it on his head, got into a vehicle and drove to the parade ground. On arrival, being somewhat late, he hastily threw off his overcoat, leaving it in the vehicle, and at once took command of his company. He had no sooner done so than, in blissful ignorance of what was disturbing his men's equanimity, he soundly rated them for their levity and unsteadiness. His feelings can better be imagined than described when he was made acquainted with the cause.

I am not up-to-date in the matter of drill, but I *do* know that it is vastly different in these Territorial days to what it was in the sixties, when we stood, like stuck pigs, with stiffened arms and with the seam of our trousers as

the boundary line for our little finger. There was a minutiae and restraint about it all, typified by the trouble and time spent upon the goose step, without which it was deemed impossible for any of us to march as we should, and the rigidity which demanded that hands and arms must be kept tight and motionless to the side instead of responding as now to the natural swing of the body. When one realizes the advantage of the elasticity and freedom allowed by the drill-book of to-day, one wonders that the Turveydropian system lasted as long as it did. The soldier is treated, in more respects than one, less like a mechanical figure and more like a human being than in the old days, and only good has come of it.

My soldiering days are over unless our national danger becomes so imminent that the old and the halt are summoned to take up arms. If they are, I will do my best to lend a hand. My father's old sword hangs where it daily reminds me of the family tradition, which is being carried on by my only son, an old Volunteer and Territorial, who rejoined when the war broke out and is still on service.

I have lived long enough to see the rise and fall of many public movements, good, bad and indifferent, but I fearlessly assert that there has been no movement so fraught with real good to the country, so far-reaching in its effects, and so calculated to promote the status and manhood of the nation, as the great Volunteer movement. It fostered a spirit of mutual dependence and good comradeship, which is a valuable asset to any nation. It provided a platform upon which all men, whatever their creeds, whatever their politics, could stand shoulder to shoulder for the defence of their common country. In its long life many good men and true have fallen out of the ranks, but their spirit remains with us. Like John Brown's body, they lie mouldering in the grave, but, thank God, the soul of this great movement still goes marching on, though under a different designation. When the old Volunteers had to be merged into the new Territorials there were sad moments, when old links had to be broken, and when old associations had to go by the board. But the old brigade rose to the occasion. They put aside all minor questions, and, simply

considering what was good for the country, threw themselves heart and soul, into the movement that thus changed the order of military things.

We old Volunteers had our faults, as I have shown, but they were very curable. Any corps in the kingdom could no doubt furnish episodes in plenty on a par with those I have set down, for they were due to causes which are common to human nature generally. We can, however, afford to recall the escapades of youth when they are condoned by the exploits of later years. Volunteers, even in the sixties, were not long in learning that discipline and efficiency are almost synonymous terms, and that a soldier's first duty is to obey orders. The force, having stood the test of time, developed into a strong rock of defence, and was accorded a military status such as was undreamt of in the days to which I have harked back. Hence we may feel assured that, "though men may come and men may go," the spirit of the old Volunteer movement will go on, if not "for ever," at least until all wars and rumours of war shall have ceased to be.

## CHAPTER IV.

The Crimean War—Its Mismanagement—Royal Artists—Peace Proclamation—A General Illumination.

IN the foregoing chapters I have set down the translation into action of such martial ardour as I possessed to the Crimean War, so it may be worth while recalling some old recollections associated with the latter. I took a vast interest in the War and in the doings of our troops, and, out of my pocket-money of twopence a week, I subscribed for a penny paper called *The War Chronicle*, so as to keep myself well abreast of all concerning military doings.

I was present, as a spectator at a window, at the local opening of the War drama, and was much impressed thereby. As I have already explained, my father's house, in which I had my being, overlooked that open space, known as Carfax, which, from time immemorial, had been the accredited spot for public demonstrations. On a dull March day in 1854, I saw, from the aforesaid coign of vantage, a little procession, consisting of the Mayor, the Sheriff, the Town Clerk and sundry Aldermen preceded by the mace-bearers, all in black gowns and cocked hats, emerge from the Town Hall, close by, and take up their position on the pavement in front of the Police Station opposite our house. Here the Town Clerk read a formidable document which told the listening crowd that we were at War with Russia and must act accordingly. At the conclusion of the reading some one called for "three cheers for the Queen," which was heartily responded to, and then the ceremony ended.

After that we lived in an atmosphere of militarism, which had all the charm of novelty, and provided much pleasing excitement to juveniles like myself. The calling

out of the Militia afforded us more military spectacles in a week than we had previously enjoyed in the whole course of our short life, whilst many regiments of the line passed through the city on their way to the War or to replace in home quarters those which had already gone. All this sounds trivial enough in these latter days, when the machinery of war is on such a gigantic scale in comparison, and we seem to be living in the midst of an armed camp. But, in the days of which I write, the preparations for meeting an enemy were something quite new to us and excited an interest and curiosity which nowadays we have to a great extent outgrown.

Music lent its inspiriting aid, and we all sang or whistled "The Red, White and Blue," "Cheer, Boys, Cheer," and the then French National Anthem, "Partant pour la Syrie," or, when sentiment was in the ascendant, "Annie Laurie." How popular the war was with those who sat at home at ease and how light-heartedly we went into it!

And then came the fearful awakening, with all its stern realities.

Forty years' peace in Europe had lulled the nation into that comfortable sense of security which is fatal to precautionary measures. So the Crimean War found us, as usual, entirely unprepared and full of that optimism which underrates difficulties.

How weary was the long waiting outside Sebastopol, with its tale of horrors, due to our entire lack of preparedness and our blundering methods! Our brave soldiers, with magnificent heroism, underwent untold sufferings and hardships, and more died at their posts from administrative neglect than from the shot and shell of the enemy.

It is well to recall this to-day when critics talk and write as though our Governmental and military shortcomings had no parallel in history. There has been nothing in these latter days equal in extent to the scandalous mismanagement and criminal blundering which were the outstanding characteristics of the Crimean War.

The acme of culpability in the shape of neglect, disorder and incapacity, in the conduct of the War having been reached, the powers-that-be ordained that there

should be a Day of "fasting, humiliation and prayer," in the hope that it might mend matters. It took place on a week-day, all the shops being shut and the bells of the churches being tolled. To me it was oppressively mournful, and the service, with most of the music omitted, was the very gloomiest I ever attended. The preacher did not attribute our misfortunes to the shortcomings of the authorities but to the sinfulness of the nation. The "sinfulness" point of view has found an echo in some pulpits of late, and perhaps with even less justification for the drawing of the deduction than there was in those earlier days.

The Royal Family were, as they are now, foremost in promoting every endeavour to alleviate the sufferings of our soldiers at the front and, besides helping in other ways, brought their personal knowledge of art to bear in the work. An exhibition of drawings and paintings by distinguished amateurs was organized, and, after having been attended with extraordinary success in London, went the round of the chief provincial towns, the proceeds of the exhibition being devoted to relieving the widows and orphans of officers slain in the War. The great attraction of the exhibition, which I was taken to see, was a series of drawings executed by five of Her Majesty's children. The most important of these was a water-colour by the Princess Royal representing a battlefield after the conflict with, in the foreground, a weeping wife caressing the body of her soldier-husband whom she has just found among the dead. There was a real tenderness of feeling in the treatment of the subject, a particularly suggestive and effective touch of pathos being supplied in the lighting of the scene by the rays of the setting sun. The only other drawing I can call to mind, in connection with the exhibition, was a clever pen-and-ink one by the Prince of Wales of an ancient chieftain in the full panoply of war. The Princess Royal's drawing was reproduced in colour, in exact facsimile, and my father subscribed a guinea for one of these copies. It passed out of my sight at his death, and I waited for long in the apparently vain hope of possessing myself of such a memento of my young days. At last,

a few years ago, at an auction sale, I discovered one of these copies framed and in excellent condition. The vendors had no knowledge of the interesting associations connected with it, so it was yoked with two or three companions of no consequence, the whole being described under the unflattering description of "sundry pictures." Needless to say I seized the opportunity, and it now hangs on the walls of one of my living rooms.

At length, in April, 1856, peace was restored, and the proclamation of it stands out in my memory by force of contrast with the declaration of war. In the latter case, the Mayor and Corporation went to the reading on foot in melancholy state and in sombre black gowns. There was a joyousness about the concluding ceremony naturally absent from the preceding one. The Mayor and Aldermen, all in their festive fur-trimmed scarlet robes, with the common council-men, were in carriages, the Mayor's chariot being drawn by white horses ridden by velvet-capped, scarlet-jacketed postboys. And, instead of confining the announcement to Carfax, it was also made in front of the University Church, in the presence of the Vice-Chancellor and heads of houses in full state, and also at each of the four sites whereon the gates of the city anciently stood. The weather did honour to the occasion, for it was a bright sunshiny day in happy contrast to the dull, leaden-hued aspect of the declaration morning. The cheerfulness was further emphasized by everybody bursting into the national anthem, when the last sentence, "God save the Queen," of the proclamation fell upon our ears. I did my level best at the open window with "heart and voice" to swell this loyal demonstration. The day was observed as a general holiday, all the shops being closed, many flags decorated the house-tops and every church tower and steeple gave forth its joyous peals. We had a singularly appropriate visitant at our house that same day, for, shortly after the proclamation of peace, a white dove, possibly startled by the unwonted hubbub and bustle, sought refuge beneath my father's roof-tree, fluttering in through an open window in the front of the house. We knew not whence it came, for we had never seen its like

within our domicile before. It did not make a long stay, taking its departure after a short rest, and went we knew not whither. It was a remarkable coincidence that the emblem of peace should visit us on this memorable day.

Later on, the authorities discussed how the return of peace could best be further celebrated. Level-headed, practical men favoured some permanent memorial, but the populace clamoured for that ephemeral, senseless piece of extravagance known as "a general illumination," and had their will. The authorities gave way because, the city having no police force worth speaking of, the powers-that-be feared the consequence if they did not yield. So there was an illumination in June, on a very fine scale, as all the colleges went to considerable expense to make an effective display, and everybody else followed suit. The common crowd took particular care to see that there was no shirking in this respect, and the rigour with which they enforced their own law was shown by the fact that one unfortunate householder had all his windows smashed because his gas illuminations went suddenly out. King Demos, when on the war-path, is not accustomed to draw nice distinctions if his behests are not immediately obeyed.

Et Fabroni' somnia genus hanc alme  
 Note qua sedes fuerat columbis  
 Et superposita perdis retineant  
 Agros mures.

Hor. Carm. 2. 11



#### G. W. R. RATHER UP A TREE

This represents the G. W. R. artisan, who, in consequence of the flooding of the site proposed for his residence, has sought refuge "up a tree"  
 (Reproduced by kind permission of Mr. H. Giles, of 23, Broad St., Oxford, from a pen-and-ink sketch)



## CHAPTER V

The Expulsion of the Book-worm from the Oxford City Free Public Library  
—The Bodleian Library—The Camera—My Work—The Chief—The Staff.

SOON as I knew enough to read the fables in Mavor's Spelling Book all by myself, so soon could I honestly subscribe to the sentiment "A Jollie good Booke whereon to Looke is better to me than Golde." And so it came to pass that I speedily became known as the "book-worm"; not a designation regarded in those days as a compliment.

My first attempt to gratify my prevailing taste in a public institution was not a success, for I hit upon one where youth was at a discount. Led by my weakness when a very small boy I bent my footsteps towards that fount of knowledge, the Oxford City Free Public Library, one of the earliest of such institutions, with the intent to enjoy myself at the expense of the ratepayers. I stole within its portals in a guilty, surreptitious sort of way, for I had my doubts as to my eligibility for admission, and silently seated myself. But the eagle eye of an official was on me, and in less than no time I was warned off, on the ground that only persons of the mature age of sixteen or over were permitted to inhale the air of that hallowed spot. His language was more abrupt, but this is what it amounted to when toned down.

I felt the rebuff and my disability keenly, but, with inherent pertinacity which, in later life, I have found a useful asset, though possibly it has been somewhat of a nuisance to others, I determined, although accepting the situation for the moment, not to rest under it. I therefore suggested to my father, who would do anything for his children, whether he couldn't use his influence with the

librarian to induce him, when, metaphorically he was sweeping the horizon, or its Library equivalent, in search of infants under sixteen, to apply his telescope to a blind eye when I came into view. So it fell out that information reached me that if I were very quiet, gave no trouble whatever to anybody, and submitted myself to all lawful ordinances, it was quite possible I might sit and read without being observed. As my father did promise and vow all these things on my behalf, I spent many happy hours in the good company of books without, so far as I could ascertain, any serious detriment to any one, including myself. As I gazed with awe and reverence upon one who sat in the seats of the mighty, otherwise the librarian's chair, and held the key of one of the gateways of knowledge, I little thought that the day would come when I should occupy that very seat in that very room, with power to order all little boys out of my sight if their parents had lacked the foresight to arrange for their offspring to enter upon the world early enough to comply with the Library regulations. However, when my chance came, boys of even tender years who did not render themselves unduly conspicuous were left in peace, but ill-behaved boys of any age had a short shrift. This, however, is a forestalling of events.

Long before I left school I had made up my mind to live, if possible, among books. But "the divinity which shapes our ends" willed—no doubt wisely—that only a comparatively brief portion of my life should be so spent. My own "rough-hewing" prevailed, however, sufficiently with my father to induce him to do what he could to compass my desires on my leaving school. He fortunately had a personal acquaintance with the Rev. H. O. Coxe, who had shortly before been appointed Bodley's librarian, and for whom my father had a great regard, which, I know, was reciprocated. Therefore, he betook himself to him and pleaded for me. He could hardly have arrived at a more opportune moment, so far as I was concerned, for it so happened that just at that time the Radcliffe Trustees, at the instigation of Dr. Acland, in pursuance of a long-cherished idea of his, had offered the fine building under

their control to the University as an additional reading-room to the Bodleian, and the good offer had been accepted. This created a demand for something akin to "a handy lad," who, as nobody was quite sure what he would have to do, was expected to give his mind to anything he was told to. In after-years it appeared to me as somewhat singular that, although the Bodleian Staff was afterwards strengthened, the only addition to the existing staff considered necessary when the Radcliffe Building was taken over, was represented by one first-class assistant, the afore-said "handy lad" and a janitor. I do not know how many candidates there were for my post, but I can quite believe that, in view of my father's relations with the librarian, it was a case of "Eclipse first and the rest nowhere." I could not lay the flattering unction to my soul that my appointment was due to any personal fitness for the post, for it was entirely owing to that auspicious conjunction of events, formed by the desire of Mr. Coxe to oblige my father and to meet an emergency, at one and the same time. Very delighted I was when my father came back with the news that I was to go to work at once, and at a salary of £20 a year, though full of anxious fears as to whether I should be equal to my responsibilities. They could have had me for less, had they only bargained with me, for I was too anxious to get among the books to let my father stick at a pound or two.

The books, mainly relating to Natural History and various branches of Science, hitherto housed in the rotunda in Radcliffe Square, were, under the new arrangement, removed to the University Museum to keep company with the zoological and other specimens to which they related. Then the building was officially re-christened the "Camera Bodleiana," which speedily became abbreviated to "The Camera." This mystified many persons who, to my own knowledge, when they read of certain grants being made by Convocation towards "The Camera," could not imagine why the University was spending so much money upon photography.

The building, when it was the Radcliffe Library, was a familiar spot to me before ever I dreamt of one day being

in charge of it, and I am glad to take this opportunity to pay tribute to Dr. Acland, who did more than any one else to promote an amicable understanding between University and City in days when relations were much more strained than at present. He was in a position to do this, because he was both a gownsman and a townsman, and occupied an exceptional position in the estimation of both bodies. In the latter fifties, he induced the Radcliffe Trustees to throw open the Library on Saturday evenings during the winter months to such of the Oxford townfolk of good repute as applied for permission to read there. Although I was then but a schoolboy, my father being on friendly terms with Dr. Acland, I was put on the privileged footing of a grown-up person, and allowed to spend my Saturday nights in the congenial company of some of the valuable books then on the shelves of the Library. I was thus introduced to those magnificent folios, among others, which illustrated the ornithological researches of Audubon and Gould, and the geological investigations of Agassiz. This encouraged my bent in such directions, and helped towards my becoming an ardent entomologist and geologist, to which I owed many a happy hour before I became too immersed in other work to continue the pursuit of such studies.

About this time, an introduction to the late Professor Westwood gave me the privilege of helping him on half-holidays at the Taylor Buildings, where the Hope Entomological collections were housed previous to their transport to the New Museum. Among other congenial work, he put me in charge of the hospital, as he called it, and I had the responsible task, when the specimens were damaged in transit, of finding their legs, antennæ, etc., and attaching them to the bodies to which they properly belonged. Apart from the interest I had in the work, it was a privilege and a delight to keep company with any one so versatile and so genial as the Professor. But this is very much of a digression, the only excuse for which lies in my desire to justify my admission within the sacred precincts of the Library at so early an age, and in a supplementary desire to point out that even a great University can sometimes

help on to a profitable track such an insignificant atom as a small boy.

I began my library career at the Camera when it was in course of preparation as an adjunct of the Bodleian, and my first job was to arrange a vast number of bound volumes of ancient periodicals, part, I think, of the Hope benefactions. Around the great stone circle of the floor of the building the letters of the alphabet were chalked, whilst in the inside of the circle the books were stacked in heaps. My business was to distribute them under the respective letters suggested by their titles. This was more of a physical than a mental strain, but, as it meant the handling of books I was well-content. I worked as though my life depended on it, for I was fearful that any relaxation of effort might end in my services being summarily dispensed with. The senior Bodleian assistant overlooked me occasionally to see that I was sticking at it, and, after I had been at it a few days, the Chief himself stepped across from the older library to investigate. I was horribly nervous in his presence, and especially when he asked the senior assistant how I was getting on. My bosom swelled with a pride which I remember to this day, when the reply came that the new hand was a good worker. My feelings then were akin to those of a young lieutenant when he is first mentioned in despatches.

On the completion of this job, which was a little trying to the muscles, I reported myself at the Bodleian. I am using this latter title throughout in the case of the older building, to distinguish it from the Camera, although this had become part and parcel of the original institution.

The Bodleian Library is too well known to need any detailed description, and my object is merely to give some account of life behind the scenes in that great institution fifty years ago, before it was reorganized and placed on that much improved footing it now occupies. Its books, its staff, and its readers have increased and multiplied to an extent never contemplated in the days to which I refer, and the result is that its usefulness, its responsibilities, and its capacity for meeting modern needs have increased tenfold. In mere size, it ranks as the sixth library in the

world, and is only surpassed in this respect in this kingdom by the British Museum. It contains over 750,000 printed volumes, representing over a million and a half of separate works or pamphlets, together with 33,000 volumes of manuscript matter. It increases at the rate of 15,000 bound, printed volumes and about fifty manuscripts yearly. It is one of the oldest public libraries in Europe. The history of its rise and development affords reading which would delight and fascinate any book-lover. But I must not be betrayed into entering upon it, as it is no use my telling what can be found in books. I have to fall back upon personal recollections of men and things, during what seems, in view of many changes, a distant past.

The dear old Library proper, as erected by Sir Thomas Bodley, so far as the building is concerned, altereth not, and as you ascend that antique oaken winding staircase, with its low easy steps and its restful seats in corners and window-ledges, and enter the fine old room, you seem to leave the bustle and glare of the twentieth century behind you, and to pass into the reposeful calm of a time when men took life more leisurely. The benches and counters are as Sir Thomas Bodley left them, and many of the folios still retain their original position. They were formerly chained to the shelves, so as to protect them against bibliophiles, deficient in moral sense, or irresponsible kleptomaniacs. Some of the old chains, which were in use until the middle of the eighteenth century, are exhibited in the Library. Extending westward is Duke Humphrey's gallery, in which students have read for over four hundred years, with its cosy nooks, overlooking Exeter College Gardens, and its beautiful timbered roof. It leads into that fine addition, known as the Selden End, and built out of monies bequeathed by Sir Thomas Bodley, who realized, before his death, that the time would come for expansion. Here, on a frame, hangs the big bell provided by Sir Thomas to give notice when the Library opened and shut, and it still fulfils that duty, though it does so inside and not, as formerly, outside the building.

These few brief particulars are necessary in order to show the environment in which I was for a time to move

and have my being, and may help to account for that vein of sentiment, not unmixed with awe, with which I entered upon my new duties. There can never be any Library in the wide world so full of history, poetry and romance as that in which I was privileged to begin my life of work.

And now, before I proceed any further, I will tell how these rambling reminiscences of the old Library came to be written. During my Bath Mayoralty, the Corporation of Oxford honoured me with an invitation to attend the Millenary of the municipality, and I gladly accepted it. I was then introduced to the recently appointed Librarian of the Bodleian, Mr. F. Madan, M.A., F.S.A., who, on learning of my old association with the Library, most kindly invited me to revisit the scene of my former work and inspect what had been done since my day. He gave me a most enjoyable time, piloting me himself over the old and the new ground, and I felt very grateful. When, on parting, I expressed this, he asked one favour of me, viz. that I would write my experiences of the old Library as I knew it fifty years ago. Though I dreaded the task, and the great risk of disappointing the anticipations of my kind friend, I had no heart to refuse after all he had done for me. It was but a small return for such charming courtesy, and his reception of what I wrote enhanced my indebtedness. In the interest of good-fellowship, and as a further tribute of gratitude to the old Library, I cannot refrain from recording the sequel to this. The librarian, after sending me a most delightful acknowledgment of my little effort of memory, read the latter to the senior assistants, who then drew up and signed an address to me. Such modesty as, in my old age, is left to me, forbids my quoting it, but I may say that it puts on record their opinion of my reminiscences, their congratulations upon my having attained to the Mayoral office, and their appreciation of the honour thereby conferred upon the Library. Its grace and spontaneity render it one of my most cherished possessions.

With a feeling of something like reverence for the old place, I embarked upon my work in the Bodleian Library.

As the green baize door leading into one of the most beautiful of rooms, in its suggestiveness of the distant past,

shut noiselessly behind me, when I entered upon my duties, I seemed to be on sacred ground in an old, old world. The solemn stillness was awe-inspiring, whilst the subtle odour of old calf, mellowed by time and exposure—to me the most captivating of perfumes—was one more harmonious note in the whole.

I was in such a frame of mind as these surroundings would engender when a junior assistant, who did not appear to me to be equally affected by the *genius loci*, informed me that it would be his pleasing duty to “show me round.” He at once proceeded to trot me, at an express pace, through all the many rooms with respect to which, he impressed upon me, I must have an intimate knowledge. With glib familiarity he rattled off the name of each in a sort of “and-don’t-you-forget-it” tone, which rather distressed me, because, by the time I had got into the next room, I had forgotten the name of the previous one. I gathered that it was a heinous offence if a book were not promptly delivered after the receipt of the scrap of blue paper notifying the want had been handed to an assistant, and I had dire visions of numberless expectant readers chafing at the delay and thirsting for my blood, whilst I was careering round the building vainly endeavouring to find the particular room in which the desired volume was reposing.

The assistant in question, though of a somewhat saturnine cast of mind, was not, as I afterwards ascertained, deficient in imagination, and gave some rein to this when enlightening me with regard to the manners and customs of the institution. Among other matters, he particularly impressed upon me—and in this he was not far wrong—that the junior assistant was subject to the orders of everybody else, and was endowed with the special privilege of doing the general fetching and carrying of the establishment, and such other jobs as did not commend themselves to his superiors. He dwelt especially upon an annual function, of a very solemn and awe-inspiring character, known as “Visitation,” previous to which, he explained, all the books were counted, in order to be quite sure they were all there. I innocently inquired what happened if

one were missing, and was told that this was a contingency too awful to contemplate, and quite sufficient to seal the fate of any junior assistant. He showed me a staff, which, at that time, was in a corner of the little study on the left-hand side, just before the gate of the avenue leading to the Selden End, and opposite the librarian's study. This staff was painted and varnished, the predominant colour being red, and was not unlike the emblem of office which I have seen on the stage in the hand of Malvolio. The assistant directed my special attention to it, inasmuch as it would be my duty, when the Vice-Chancellor came in solemn state for "Visitation," to precede him with this staff in my hand, as he perambulated the various rooms to assure himself that all the books were there and in their places. The assistant further kindly showed me, by actual demonstration, the angle at which the staff should be held, and the manner and gait I was expected to assume on such a momentous occasion, so as to strictly conform to the regulations.

My desire to perfect myself in the proper handling of this wand of office, so as to run no risk of incurring the Vice-Chancellor's displeasure, led to my instituting inquiries in other directions as to how soon I should be expected to take upon myself the duty in question. The explosive hilarity which followed my efforts to acquaint myself more fully with what was expected of me, testified alike to the imaginative genius of my informant as well as to my own mental receptivity. I was but a simple-minded youth in those days, with a trustful belief that everything and everybody connected with the great Library must be transparently truthful and brimful of elevated ideas. Further intercourse, however, with the working-staff sufficiently assured me that—good fellows as they were—they did not strictly conform to this standard, nor was it to be expected. I had to realize that, after all, even the Bodleian was but a mundane institution, and that those associated with it were but ordinary mortals—though of a better type than most. In their company I soon came down to earth, and became as pronounced in my worldliness as the gayest among them. I owe much to all of them, for they did something to discipline and educate me in the ways of the

world at large ; in a knowledge of which a schoolboy was naturally deficient. And there was no lack of good-comradeship either.

Although the assistant drew upon his imagination when he informed me that it would be my business safely to conduct the Vice-Chancellor through the Library, the ceremony of Visitation was a stern reality, although the presence of the assistants was not required at it. It consisted of a perambulation of the Library by the curators, consisting of the Vice-Chancellor, the Proctors, and five Regius Professors, and it took place annually in November, its purport being to inquire particularly into the state and condition of the Library. The proceedings began with a Latin speech by an orator appointed by the Dean of Christ Church, and the after-doings are worth putting on record on account of their quaintness. The statutes of the Library adopted by Convocation enact "That on every annual Visitation 40s. out of the rents of the Library chest shall be spent in a dinner or supper to be prepared for them (the Curators) within the University precincts, wherever the Vice-Chancellor chooses, as an honorary testimony and a mark of the respect due to their persons and professions. Thereover we make it the business of the Vice-Chancellor to cause certain pairs of gloves to be presented to the Bedell during supper-time as notable badges, whereby the University attests its remembrance and gratitude of the services performed ; and seven pairs (at 10s. each) are to be given to the five Regius Professors and the Proctors, and one pair (at 5s.) to the Bedell in Waiting ; and the Proctors are to be paid for their faithful custody of the keys ; and lastly we would have presented to the Vice-Chancellor one pair of gloves at 20s., or two pairs at 10s. each, together with 20 pieces of gold (which at the present day we call nobles), for his employment in the receipt and payment of the Library monies, and for his pains in seeing to its interest and embellishment."

One piece of information, if ever it were vouchsafed to me, I did not sufficiently grasp or neglected to act upon, and that was the existence of what I afterwards ascertained was known as "the booby-trap," and which seems to have

been specially designed for the benefit, or otherwise, of junior assistants. There used to be a narrow gallery, since removed, with shelves full of books throughout its length, over the line of readers' compartments and closed studies on each side of the avenue leading to the Selden End of the Library. In the gallery, on the right hand, not far from the end of the avenue, there was a break in the flooring to allow of a flight of stairs leading down to a door opening upon the avenue. Supposing you were aware of the existence of these stairs, and did not desire to descend them, either deliberately or abruptly, you took a long stride over the opening from one side to the other, in order to proceed on your way through the gallery. Cimmerian gloom pervaded this spot, there being no direct light on it, which may account for the fact that, shortly after my advent in the Library, instead of taking the long stride which would have carried me safely over, I stepped into space. I had an armful of books at the time, and down all the stairs I went with startling rapidity, accompanied by the books, and winding up with a crash against the door at the foot. The general effect was very much as if a cart-load of bricks had been suddenly projected from above. The incident was attended by a certain amount of physical suffering, but this was entirely dwarfed by my mental pangs at the thought of the sacrilege I was committing in breaking the solemn stillness of the Library in this brutal way, notwithstanding the injunctions as to silence all over the place. My disturbing, in this unseemly manner, the mental depths of the librarian and the subs., and the devotions, otherwise the studies, of the readers, filled me with apprehensions as to what penalty I might have to pay. However, I am glad to say, nothing beyond personal bruises resulted. No one rushed forth to seize me by the collar and demand what I meant by it; in fact, it seemed to be regarded as quite a natural occurrence, and one liable to happen in even the best-regulated libraries, especially when, as in this case, it is so amply provided for. Nevertheless, I congratulate all present junior assistants in not having to traverse that particular piece of roadway, or rather lack of roadway, for Nature abhors a vacuum and sometimes fills it unexpectedly.

Among other unwritten laws for the promotion of silence was one that nobody must go about in creaking boots, and I never knew a better calculated place than the silent library for obtaining the most striking effects in this direction; the very matting itself seemed capable of extracting every possible note that a boot could compass. A new pair of boots soon brought me to the front, for to my sorrow they actually seemed to cry aloud and shout in their joy at perambulating for the first time the Bodleian matting. I was speedily hauled off to a large cistern on the premises, on the edge of which I sat and dangled my feet, so that they just reached the top of the water. This was said to be a certain specific for the complaint, and it was so long as the boots remained wet, for this damped their ardour, but they recovered their spirits, I fancy, when dry, and more drastic measures had then to be resorted to.

While the Camera was being furnished for its new purpose, and also whenever afterwards I was more wanted by the mother Library than by its adopted child, the former monopolized my services. My position was never defined, but I corresponded to that known on the stage as "general utility"—that is to say, I was at everybody's beck and call, and was expected to turn my hand to any job that nobody else cared to undertake.

I was speedily initiated into the mysteries of "incorporating slips," and I think that nothing in connection with my appearance upon the Bodleian stage gave more general and genuine satisfaction than the fact that some one had arrived who could relieve all and sundry of this back-aching job. It was all very well when you were inserting the slips in the upper drawers of the two nests for the purpose, on either side of the approach to the readers' avenue, but when you had to deal with authors' names which, alphabetically, had to come into drawers not many inches from floor-level, it was a different matter. So it naturally fell out that in my early days all the interstices of my time were filled up in this way. Although it is too prosaic a job to captivate the imaginative, I can see now how good a training it was. In the first place, it taught

one the necessity of concentration, because directly you allowed your thoughts to wander you were liable to put a slip in the wrong place, and it was conveyed to me, at the start, that this was next door to a crime, because it might lead to the supposition that a certain book was not in the Library, when it was there all the time; thus the necessity of strict accuracy was also brought home to me. Then it inculcated that most valuable of lessons to any one starting in life, that work did not mean just what one liked to do, but what had to be done. Looking back through a vista of years, I am convinced that a certain amount of absolute drudgery in early days is an absolute necessity as a preliminary to even moderate success in life.

When so engaged, I was always at hand and in evidence for messenger purposes and for despatch to other regions in search of books for readers or the higher officials.

When the Camera was ready for the reception of readers, I spent a good deal of my time there, and was in sole charge when either of my two superiors was at meals or on holidays. I was on duty, too, by night as well as by day, in order to relieve the assistant who came on duty from 4 to 10 p.m. I was the only assistant who had a double shift, and I used, at first, to think it was rather hard to have one's evenings cut up in this way. However, I can't say I found it any real hardship in the end, for I became so fond of the place that I often stayed long after my allotted time there. This was in a measure due to the *cacoëthes scribendi* which possessed me, and which could be exercised in such congenial surroundings. Local antiquarian lore especially attracting me, the Gough Room at the Bodleian had always a charm for me. My nights at the Camera were not entirely barren of result, inasmuch as a local paper was good enough to print much of what I garnered.

As time went on, I was given more responsibility, and the periodical department, which included all magazines, transactions of societies, and other works of a serial character, was placed under my particular care. I also catalogued new books when called upon, and modern works requiring binding were handed over to me. I was left to settle the class of binding, to condense the title for the

lettering, to record the transaction, and to check the return from the binders.

I stood in genuine awe of the Chief—known in every bibliographical circle as “Coxe of the Bodleian”—and yet he inspired such a feeling within me that I would have done anything to earn his approving smile, not for any personal end, but because I believed so thoroughly in the value of his opinion. I think my awe arose in a great measure from my exalted estimate of the office he held. Yet his words to me were always kindly, and he never bestowed a reproof upon me. When the day came for me to quit the scene of my earliest labours his helpful kindness was unforgettable, and I still treasure his handsome testimonial, which did so much to secure for me the object of my desires. His face had all the charm of an expressive ruggedness, in which tenderness, humour and force were combined. One could see in it what comfort he could bring as a cleric to those in need of it, what a sunbeam he could be in society, and what strength there could be in his denunciation of anything that was cowardly or mean. If he had spared himself more, by practising devolution in work, he would have rendered still greater service to the cause to which he gave himself with such self-denying zeal. It was sad to see him in his little study, slaving away, with such laborious devotion, at work which an ordinary clerk could have done just as well. But it is a great thing to be loved as he was, and to live and die without a single enemy in the world ; for he could not possibly have had one.

Of his bibliographical and paleographical erudition it is not for me, out of the depths of my ignorance, to speak. But his unmasking of the Greek forger, Simonides, with his Nineteenth Century MS., will long be quoted as an illustrious example of knowledge and discernment combined.

Two incidents, which occurred during my own time, illustrate other traits in his character. On the occasion of one of his visits to Panizzi, the then librarian of the British Museum, he pulled out of his pocket a little volume with the inquiry :

“What do you think of that, Panizzi ? ”

The latter at once went into raptures over it, described

it as a treasure, and eagerly asked where his brother-librarian picked it up. The reply was :

"At a little book-shop which you pass most days, as it is close to the Museum, and I gave sixpence for it."

"Oh, you must let me have it for the Museum," said Panizzi, "for we haven't a copy, and I'll give you twenty pounds for it."

"No," said the Chief, "it's not for sale. I bought it for the Bodleian, and it will have it for what it cost, sixpence."

Of course, all of us who had anything to do with him instinctively realized that there was a mailed fist behind the velvet glove, though it was rarely in evidence, for only great provocation—something flagrantly dishonest—brought it forth, but it was there for all that. He put trust in all of us, on the assumption that we would justify it, but it would have gone hardly with any of us if he had discovered that we were unworthy of this confidence.

I remember the unexpectedly cold douche he once administered to one in *statu pupillari*, who, desiring to read at the Camera, brought the usual recommendation from his tutor. The Chief inquired of the applicant what particular line of study he was pursuing. This was a poser for one who had no special thirst for knowledge, so he hesitatingly replied that he hardly knew.

"Ah," said the Chief, "I suppose you just want to while away the time?"

"Yes," said the victim somewhat irresolutely, feeling a bit uneasy.

"The latest novel is rather what you have in your mind, I expect," continued the relentless Chief.

"Yes," said the victim cheerfully, rejoicing at the thought that at last he could give a definite and assured reply without drawing upon his imagination.

"Then," said his interrogator sternly, "the Library was never intended for such as you, and tell your tutor not to send me any more of the same sort."

Exit undergraduate, no doubt marvelling greatly what was the weak point in his responses.

The sub-librarians, during most of my time, were Dr.

Payne-Smith—afterwards Dean of Canterbury—and the Rev. Alfred Hackman, whilst Professor Max Müller succeeded the former towards the end of my term, and I have none but pleasant memories of all of them. It was always a privilege to do anything for Dr. Payne-Smith, he was so friendly and considerate. I was on terms of friendship with Hackman before I came to the Library, for he was Precentor at Christ Church, when I was at the Cathedral School, where his rollicking geniality won the hearts of all of us. Till I was undeceived, I always took him to be an Irishman, not only on account of his gift of speech and ready wit but also because he had just the O'Connell type of face, though on a reduced scale, and which one always associates with the orthodox Stage Irishman, and finds described in the pages of Lever and Lover. He was a Londoner, but I fancy his forbears must have migrated to the Metropolis from the Green Isle at some time or other. He was a lovable compound of boyishness and literary scholarship, with a twinkle in his eye sufficient to elicit a responsive smile from the most stoical. He was a powerful preacher, with a command of voice and feature which would have ensured his success on the stage. It was worth a Sabbath day's journey to hear him tell a story, especially if it were against himself, for he had all the histrionic capacity of a born actor. He used to tell how once he had a desire for a pedigree, and so set out to investigate his family history. He had not proceeded far in his researches when he found that one of his direct ancestors, Lieut. Hackman, murdered a lady, Miss Ray, to whom he was attached, but who was appropriated by another, and was duly hanged for it at Tyburn, in 1779. This effectually quenched his descendant's thirst for a knowledge of his progenitors, and, said he :

“No more pedigrees for me. Heaven only knows what else I should have found out, had I gone on.”

The Rev. W. D. Macray was another official—although not a sub—with whom I could claim to be on very friendly terms. I knew his father, who was the librarian of the Taylor Institution, extremely well, and had a great regard for him, and he it was who, in my schooldays, commended



REV. ALFRED HACKMAN,  
VICAR OF ST. PAUL'S, OXFORD, SUB-LIBRARIAN OF THE BODLEIAN LIBRARY  
AND ONE OF THE PIONEERS OF THE HIGH CHURCH MOVEMENT



me to the good offices of Professor Westwood, already referred to. His son, my old Bodleian friend, enjoyed a well-earned repose, after a life of devoted work of unpayable value, until this last December, when he passed peacefully away at the age of ninety-six. To me he was always the embodiment of cultured placidity, the very personification of a calm which seemed to defy all disturbance, but which could always call up a kindly word and look for everybody. It was a real pleasure to me to join in the demonstration of affection which celebrated his long connection with the Library, for he served it well and faithfully for sixty-five years—from 1840 to 1905.

We assistants were a cheery lot, to say the least. We exploited each other's foibles in a spirit of innocent chaff, which had no malice in it, and many a good story went the round of us.

“ The problems of life, of the State, of the day,  
We tackled in search of the truth,  
And we settled 'em all in that light-hearted way,  
Which is one of the blessings of youth ;  
And, with all the cock-sureness of youth.”

We also had a living interest in what may be termed the domestic side of each other's lives. For instance, such events as the attainment of a majority, or, in the case of married assistants, an addition to the population, were invariably celebrated in one way, the person immediately concerned always standing a bottle of sherry to celebrate the event. It was also invariably obtained at one particular wine-merchant's, and cost exactly half-a-crown. I remember my immediate senior at the Camera, at an early stage of his matrimonial career, became the father of twins, to our great delight. We pointed out that he ought, in view of this inestimable blessing, to double the quantum of liquor, but, so far as my memory serves me, he did not view the matter quite in the same light as ourselves.

For those who were lucky enough to be “ in the swim,” there were pecuniary recompenses, in addition to salaries, to be had by assistants, in the shape of orders, from the outside world, for extracts from MSS., etc. If these came direct to you, without any official intervention, you

executed the commission "on your own," and made what you could out of it. When public bodies, however, such as Record Commissioners, wanted whole volumes of extracts, then application was, of course, made to the Chief, who handed over the whole business to the senior assistant, who apportioned the copying and accruing emoluments to himself and such others as he thought were entitled to participate. I was not one of these, deriving what comfort I could extract from the assurance that there was barely enough to go round in the case of my seniors, let alone the juniors. I can't say I took it to heart, for I never had any great fondness for making extracts, except to illustrate some point in an antiquarian paper, and this element of interest was lacking when you simply did it at so much a folio, whether you cared for the subject or not.

But the real gold-mine was the affluent man who wanted a pedigree or the records of a family, because, properly worked, this provided so inexhaustible a field for research that it might go on for a lifetime. Of course, a good deal depended upon the manipulative ability of whoever had the job in hand, for it required not only a knowledge of the art of tracing things out but also an intimate acquaintance with the intricacies of human nature, peculiar to the individual who was finding the sinews of war. If, for instance, you discovered too much of an ancient lineage all at once, it might convey the impression that there was no difficulty in unearthing what was wanted, thereby cheapening the work, besides tending to shorten it. If, on the other hand, there was too much lagging in the advent of information, there was a liability of exhausting the patience of one whose "family pride can't be denied," and bringing the investigation to a summary conclusion in consequence. Here, then, it was that such tact and discrimination came in as permitted of an even flow of information, with a sudden surprise thrown in every now and then as a stimulant. I do not speak from personal experience, never having been fortunate enough to be entrusted with such a job, but it seemed to me the sort of system upon which such researches were conducted. There was a pedigree-search running, in the hands of one of my

seniors, when I first arrived at the Library, and when I left, between four and five years afterwards, it was still going strong. Maybe it is even now pursuing its course, but, alas! not under the same auspices, for he to whom it was originally entrusted, like most of my old associates, has gone the way of all flesh.

## CHAPTER VI

Readers at the Camera—Pusey, Liddon, Stanley and Jowett—The Old Order changeth—The Apotheosis of the Book-worm.

**A**S I was so often on duty at the Camera, and very often in sole charge, I saw more of the readers there than at the Bodleian proper, but I have had some pleasure in remembering in after-life the many shining lights in the ecclesiastical firmament whose wants I had the privilege of ministering to in the humble capacity of a server of books in the older Library. I admit I was only the blower of the organ, whose reverberation afterwards resounded through St. Mary's and elsewhere, but it was something to come into direct personal contact with such luminaries as Pusey, Liddon, Stanley, Jowett and others, who made theological history at an eventful period.

Whenever I think of the regular frequenters of the Library, there comes into my mind the figure of young—this was generally his prefix—Philip Pusey, the only and afflicted son of Dr. Pusey. There was something infinitely pathetic in the dauntless courage with which he struggled against physical disabilities which would have driven many a one to despair. Though his features were drawn and distorted, an intellectual light shone out from his eyes; he had lost the use of both legs, and he was terribly deaf. Yet he bore all that this meant to him with infinite patience, and gave himself to tasks which would have taxed the energies of the strong and active. He was devoted to the study of ancient Biblical and Patristic MSS.; hence his frequent journeys to the Library. We knew of his coming, some time before the green-baize door shut behind him, by the thud, thud of his crutches on the stairs. What fortitude and endurance he must have had to master that

ascent, for there were many, many steps to surmount, as I, who went up and down them often enough, knew full well ! Yet he had to swing himself, by the aid of his crutches, from stair to stair in a way that must have inflicted upon him a great physical strain. He was the only person privileged to disturb by conversation the silence of Bodley whenever he liked, for otherwise he would never have been able to make himself understood. It was a small concession which no one could begrudge to one so afflicted.

Often, as I sat near the librarian's table incorporating slips, have I heard the shrill, piping treble of his voice—for even in this he was not as other men were—and the deeper response of the Chief, conveyed through the long speaking-tube, as they exchanged notes upon the authenticity or otherwise of some manuscript, for Pusey knew more than enough of such matters to be able to discuss them with experts. His love for his work of examining any manuscripts bearing upon the subject to which he had given himself, induced him, on several occasions, notwithstanding the great disadvantages under which he laboured, to visit some of the Monasteries of Asia Minor. He did not allow the fact that they were frequently situated at heights where access was difficult even to the strong to daunt him, and he would have himself carried up the steep, mountainous pathways. I have been told that his learning and his amiability combined always secured for him a warm welcome in the religious establishments he visited, although their church was not his, and “Brother Philip,” as they called him, won their hearts sufficiently to be pressed to come again. His life was a triumph of mind over matter, for a great heart beat in a frail body.

At the Camera I had, speaking generally, to do with readers of a more mundane type than those at the Bodleian, and I had closer intercourse with them. Some came day after day for months, and then often quite a pleasant intimacy sprang up between them and those of us who were in charge. Among such visitors in 1865 were two of the members of the Historical Manuscript Commission, viz. Dr. C. W. Russell, the President of Maynooth College, and

Mr. J. P. Prendergast, who were both engaged in an examination of the Carte MSS., which were brought over from the Bodleian for their use. The former was a great personal friend of Newman, who said in a letter, referring to his joining the Church of Rome, that "my dear friend, Dr. Russell, had perhaps more to do with my conversion than any one else." I do not remember ever meeting any one who seemed to be a more complete embodiment of the highest culture, coupled with the deepest spirituality. One can quite understand one so endowed appealing strongly to such a temperament as Newman's, for not only must they have had much in common but, as it appeared to me when I heard Newman preach, there was the same quality of ethereality in both. Mr. Prendergast, who was the author, among other historical works, of *The Cromwellian Settlement of Ireland*, worked, together with his wife, at the Camera for several months. He was a most agreeable man, with a very varied store of information, which he was always ready to impart. Both he and Dr. Russell left me much their debtors, for in the kindness of their hearts, when they heard I was a candidate for the librarianship which called me away from the Bodleian, they each, for my benefit, addressed to the elective body a communication that could not fail to carry much weight. As, perhaps, in the course of these reminiscences, I may have conveyed the impression that we assistants hardly approached our duties in that serious-minded spirit which the *genius loci* should have invoked, I may be forgiven for quoting a certificate of character bestowed by Dr. Russell upon those of us who were brought into immediate contact with him, and which, in his neat handwriting, is still to be found, among my Bodley reliques. It runs:

"I can state with truth that, in none of the many public libraries in which I have read, have I experienced greater kindness, courtesy and substantial assistance, than in the Camera."

There were just three of us to divide this between.

Another student for some weeks was Sir Thomas Erskine May, afterwards Lord Farnborough, constitutional jurist, who held at one time and another many

Parliamentary offices, including Clerk of the House of Commons, and who was engaged upon historical research work. He was a most courtly man, of fine presence and the pink of aristocratic refinement in dress, manners and bearing. I can see him in my mind's eye still in a grey frock-coat and trousers, a white waistcoat, and one of the tall white hats which were then in vogue.

Miss Charlotte Yonge, Miss Sewell and Guizot, historian and statesman, were among the many notabilities whom I remember visiting the Library in my time, together with Oronyateka, a young North American Indian, concerning whom there hangs a tale which may be worth the telling. I can vouch for its accuracy, because I had it direct from the lips of one who knew all the circumstances, viz. Dr. Freeborn, who was Dr. Acland's close friend, confrère, and next-door neighbour.

Dr., afterwards Sir Henry Acland, Regius Professor of Medicine at Oxford, who was the younger brother of the late Sir Thomas Dyke Acland, the well-known West of England baronet, was one of those kindly disposed men whose desire was to establish friendly relations with all with whom he came into contact, and the confidence he could inspire was not confined to Oxford, or even to civilized communities, as what follows will serve to show. At the special request of the Prince Consort, he accompanied the Prince of Wales, when the latter went on his American tour in 1859-60. The doctor then took the opportunity to visit, on his own account, the prairies and to make acquaintance with the noble savage in his native wigwam. The charm of the doctor's personality was felt by the Indian chiefs and their belongings, who received him in the most friendly spirit. They told him all about themselves and their mode of life, and he, in his turn, discoursed to them of the great University whence he had come. When the hour of parting arrived, his heart naturally warmed towards those who had been so cordial to him, and, when hands were finally grasped, he expressed a hope that some of them might one day get as far as Oxford and come and see him. Among those whose listening ears had drunk in his description of the abode where men learnt so much

was a young chief, in full paint and feathers, named Oronyateka, or Burning Cloud.

On the doctor's return to Oxford, he gave the citizens the benefit of the interesting experiences he had thus acquired in the form of a lecture delivered in the Town Hall. He called it "The Myth of Hiawatha," and he illustrated Longfellow's poem by descriptions of what he had himself seen of Indian life and by drawings and collections he had made upon the spot. I well remember how picturesquely and graphically he depicted the Redskin and his surroundings.

Some time after this, there one day came a ring at the front-door bell of the doctor's house in Broad Street. The servant who answered the summons was somewhat surprised to see a coppery-complexioned gentleman, with deep-set black eyes and prominent cheek-bones. His costume denoted a desire to defer to European susceptibilities, with an inadequate knowledge of how to give effect to it, for, although he had dispensed with his war-paint, he retained his mocassins and deer-hide. He explained that he wished to see Dr. Acland, and on being told that he was out he said that then he would wait until he came in. He accordingly did so, and when the doctor arrived he met him with outstretched hands and the exclamation :

"I am come ! I am come !" The doctor was somewhat taken aback. "Ah," said the stranger, "am I not Oronyateka ! You say come, and I come !"

Then the truth burst upon the doctor, and forthwith he gave the child of the prairie hospitable welcome.

Oronyateka soon made it clear not only that he had come but that he had come to stay. His tribe had found just enough money—of which he had  $4\frac{1}{2}d.$  left and no more—to defray the cost of his long journey, in the belief apparently that Alma Mater provided all the necessaries of life for those who counted themselves as her children. He explained, as well as his limited knowledge of our language admitted, that he wanted to learn all that Oxford could teach, and then he would go back and instruct his fellow Indians. The doctor had no doubt in his own mind

as to the first thing to be done, and that was to get his visitor at the earliest possible moment into garments more in accordance with Oxford notions than those he was then wearing. Having accomplished this, the doctor began to lionize him, and brought him, among other places, to the Reading Room of the Bodleian, where I was at that time engaged. Here Oronyateka signed his name, as I well remember, in good, bold characters in the visitors' book.

In the end, a subscription was raised in the University with a view to providing means for him to fulfil his object in coming to Oxford, and this enabled him to enter at St. Edmund Hall. It is pleasant to know that the child of the prairie amply justified the interest taken in him. On leaving Oxford, he settled in Ontario, where he became a Doctor of Medicine and a Justice of the Peace. He then greatly interested himself in the Ancient Order of Foresters, and was practically the creator of the Society in Canada, ultimately attaining to the position of Supreme Chief Ranger. In this capacity, in 1893, he visited Bath, and attended a meeting of Court "Prince Bladud," at Beau Nash House. When he died in 1907, the Court put on record its appreciation of the great services he had rendered to the Order, and passed a resolution of regret at his death and condolence with his relatives and with the Supreme Court in the loss they had sustained. He was a keen rifleman, and in 1871 was a member of the Canadian team which competed at Wimbledon. So the kindly interest and generosity of Sir Henry Acland and others bore abundant fruit.

I can only remember one visitor who violently vented his displeasure upon me, and that was Charles Reade, the novelist, who was also a Fellow of Magdalen College. He was an indefatigable worker in collecting and verifying information, which he used in building up his stories, and the Bodleian book-shelves were often drawn upon for this purpose. While he would have a number of books reserved for his use at the Camera, he only consulted them at irregular intervals: that is to say, he would come one evening, and then two or three evenings would elapse before he put in another appearance. During one of these

interregnums, an undergraduate unwittingly took possession of the desk previously used by the distinguished author, who, on arrival, when I was in charge, found the place so occupied. Furious at such a sacrilegious proceeding, he made for me like a bull at a gate, and loudly demanded what I meant by allowing any one to sit in his chair. He was a tall, fine man, who towered above me in his wrath, and, somewhat taken aback, I began to explain, when, in stentorian tones, he asked me if I was aware who he was? Before I could answer he said :

“ I am Charles Reade,” and waited to see the petrifying effect it would have upon me.

I did not at once fall, as though smitten by a thunderbolt, but plucked up courage to say that it was quite impossible to prevent readers taking unoccupied seats, and that it was one of my instructions that no particular seats were to be reserved for anybody. This only added fuel to the flame, and he demanded the name of the too-daring spirit who had ensconced himself in the lion's lair. On my vouchsafing the information, he responded :

“ And pray is he such a man as Charles Reade—I never heard of him before ? ”

This was uttered with such stern emphasis, that it has never left my memory. The end of it was, he stalked out of the place with the injured dignity of one suffering under a grievous affront, leaving me, metaphorically, “ struck all of a heap.”

But there was a happy sequel, with more than a sufficient solatium for any wounded feelings I may have had. When Henry Haines, my superior, who took on the charge of the building later on in the evening, arrived, I duly reported what had happened, and, very irate with the novelist, he expressed his intention of going for him at the first opportunity. Knowing something of his temperament, we both thought that he would probably have simmered down and repented by the morning, and I saw a legitimate chance of compassing an end thereby. At that time I was, and have been ever since, an enthusiastic collector of autographs of notable people, under which category the author of *The Cloister and the Hearth* and

*It's Never Too Late to Mend*, distinctly came; so we hatched a little plot: Haines, when he saw Reade, was to pile up the agony, so far as my injured feelings were concerned, and when the requisite height had been reached he was to suggest to the author that he should make amends by presenting me with his autograph. This, as I pointed out, would not only amply compensate me but would convey a delicate compliment to the novelist by showing the value attached to his signature. All fell out as was anticipated. Haines did full justice to his case, and Charles Reade became sufficiently remorseful, and so desirous of making honourable amends, that he was only too ready to do so in the way proposed. The result, which he desired should be handed to me, is enshrined among many similar treasures in my collection, and, on one of the Bodleian blank Catalogue-slips of the period, in the big, bold caligraphy of the author, with a fine flourish attached to the signature, runs the legend:

“Here, Mr. Haines,  
Though not worth the pains,  
Is the autograph of  
CHARLES READE.”

The writer was known as one of those large-hearted but impetuous spirits whose feelings, when they were particularly moved, were too strong to admit of repression. Then, like many others, upon whom the divine afflatus has descended, his own personality loomed large within him. But his bark was always far worse than his bite, and he did what a really strong man always does—admits an error and does his best to make amends.

“The old order changeth yielding place to new,” and what I have said about the Bodleian of yesterday is far from applying to it to-day. The very increase of books and readers has necessitated its being worked upon different and more organized lines. The general arrangements are altered—the old galleries already referred to are gone, the transcribers no longer work on the right of the Selden End of the Library, but in a portion of the Picture Gallery, boarded off for their use. In my day, there was plenty

of room, and to spare, for readers in the Bodleian bays, but I doubt if this is so now. At the Camera only the first-floor was occupied by readers, the Gallery being then utilized for the Hope collection of Prints, in charge of the Rev. J. S. Treacher. Now the Gallery is required for readers—the Prints having been removed—and the whole of the basement for books, in addition to the great subterranean adjunct of recent construction. And there is now a method and an order in the distribution of the work to be carried on, which, judging from my own experience, was a little lacking in my time. But the old rooms, named after such generous benefactors as Douce, Gough, Laud, Rawlinson, Malone, Ashmole, and many others, with the Auctarium full of so much that is priceless, remain practically unaltered, as a recent revival on the spot of old memories enables me to testify. Even the Bodleian, so long the type of an old order of things, has not stood still, but has been, and is, adapting itself and its methods to the wants of the moment.

At last the time came when “fresh woods,” although hardly “pastures new,” for I was still, for a time, to be among books, attracted me. A librarian was wanted for the Oxford City Free Public Library, and the combined inducements of a higher salary and a greater control than fell to my lot at the Bodleian determined me to offer myself for the vacancy, sorry though I was to part with the work which had so fully absorbed me. There were plenty of aspirants to the post, and never, on account of my youth, should I have stood the remotest chance, had it not been for the kindly testimony, borne on my behalf, by the librarian and sub-librarians of the Bodleian, and by not a few readers of note who had seen something of me. Owing to such good help, I was elected after a fight, and held the post till I was called upon to mount another rung of life’s ladder. My passing from the Bodleian closed the first chapter of my workaday life, and another was opened, which was even more fruitful in incident than its predecessor.

But I cannot part with my subject without a grateful acknowledgment of all the old Library did for me. Whilst

it gave me my first start in life, which led on to much else, I also owe to it a training that was essential to success, and a knowledge of men and things that did much to smooth my pathway afterwards. So I like to think of the old place as I knew it, and when I revisit Oxford I generally find my way there. I have to go, however, somewhat more leisurely up the ancient staircase than I did in the old days, even when I had an armful of books to carry as well as myself; however, I get there all the same. But, though the old books are still there, are not the old faces gone beyond recall? No, not quite, for in my mind's eye, I am thankful to say, I see them.

Having attained to the dignity of a full-blown librarian, I suppose I may be said to have justified my devotion to books, and to have established a claim to be considered something of more general utility than a mere book-worm. At any rate, I did not follow the example of my prototype, and confine my attention solely to the bibliographical interiors, inasmuch as my main mission was to bring readers and books into happy conjunction, so as to aid in promoting the ultimate triumph of mind over matter. As the crying want of the institution, over which I was called upon to preside, was a general reorganization and a greater adaptability to the wants of the time, I found an ample field for the exercise of the energy and audacity of youth. However, the instinct of self-preservation was sufficiently strong within me as to temper my boldness with a determination to have my Committee at my back when I had to make clean sweeps. So I spent between ten and eleven comfortable years in the service of the Corporation, and no official could have had more kindly consideration or more generous support than was extended to me during that time by my Committee and every one else. The opposition to my candidature was mainly based upon the grounds that, at twenty-two, I was too young for such a responsibility as I sought; that, nurtured in the rarefied atmosphere of the Bodleian, I should be unable to adapt myself to the more democratic conditions incidental to the governing of a Free Public Library; and that I should make the appointment only a stepping-stone to something else.

I remained at my post long enough to live down each of these supposed disabilities, and so when the hour of parting came the regret was mutual. I relinquished my trust because Providence ordained that I should take upon myself more arduous responsibilities in other and very different spheres of work, and under circumstances which left me no option but to respond to the call. My tenure of office in a Free Library was an experience well worth having. It brought me into daily association with a workaday world of a different type from that to which I had been accustomed, and so necessarily broadened one's outlook, and enlarged one's sympathies. At the Bodleian I came into direct contact with the highest types of culture, with the recognized embodiments of intellectuality and research. In a Free Library one had to do with all sorts and conditions of men, and many in those walks of life where muscle and sinew count for more than scholarship. But being a working-man myself—even if I was lamentably below the physical level of those who are regarded as the typical representatives of the toilers—I had a fellow-feeling for those who spent their strength in labour, though it was exercised in a field of work in which I could not compete. So I can look back upon this stage in life's journey with pleasant recollections of my fellow-travellers, and in the belief that it did something towards better fitting me to cope with the difficulties awaiting me in the larger world I was bidden to enter, which meant the editorship and general management of a county newspaper among other duties.

The main incidents attendant upon my tenure of office in the City Library were too local and too technical to be of interest to ordinary readers, but I may put two of them on record, as being somewhat exceptional. I had the privilege of receiving and conducting through the Library the first embassy to this country from China. It consisted of His Excellency the Commissioner, Pin-ta-Jin, and suite, all of whom were arrayed in the characteristic garments peculiar to Celestials. His Excellency evinced great interest in the working of a Free Library, and showed this by the practical character of the questions, which, through an interpreter, he put to me. He wound up by assuring

me that he felt so much interest in everything relating to literature, that he regretted he could not communicate his sentiments in the English language, and smilingly added that no doubt I had an equal regret with regard to Chinese ; which was perfectly true.

Another distinguished personage who honoured the Library with a visit was the ill-fated Emperor of Brazil, Pedro II., one of the most scholarly and intellectual of monarchs. His thirst for information was prodigious, and this induced him to spend a good deal of time in search of it out of his own kingdom, which possibly had something to do with his final overthrow. When he visited Oxford, where he stayed the night, he got up at a most unearthly hour in the morning, in order to wander about by himself among its many buildings, and thereby see as much as he could in the time at his disposal ; as a sightseer, he could have given long odds to the most indefatigable of Cook's tourists. He was thoroughly interested in all I could tell him about the Library, and was particularly astonished and gratified to learn that an average of over one thousand persons used it daily. By the time he had finished his perambulation of Europe, his subjects had come to the conclusion that, having done without him so long, they could dispense with him altogether. So a bloodless revolution resulted in the establishment of a Republic. I had sufficiently pleasant recollections of Pedro to feel genuinely sorry when he was relieved of his regal responsibilities.

## CHAPTER VII

Some Ancient Observances—Christmas Day—Twelfth Day—Valentine's Day—May Day—Oak-Apple Day—Guy Fawkes' Day.

ONE would expect to find many survivals of a distant past at Oxford, and every college, except those of recent date, could furnish examples of this in its government and usages.

There is no collegiate observance, however, which calls up visions of ancient days more forcibly or has more picturesqueness than the Boar's Head celebration at Queen's College on Christmas Day. At the famous Christmas feasts of our ancestors no dish that came to table was more highly esteemed than the Boar's Head. First at the feast and foremost on the board, it was universally acknowledged as "the bravest dish in all the land," and, although elsewhere its glory has departed, and its old supremacy at the table has vanished, yet at Queen's College it is still highly honoured and rules the roast once a year, when it is served up with a state and ceremony accorded to no other dish. Having witnessed its glorification on two or three occasions, I can say something about it for the information of the many who have not done so. The majority probably have no previous knowledge that anything so quaint and so redolent of the olden time has held its own so long, for it dates back more than five hundred years.

The setting is worthy of the ceremony, for the scene is the fine old college hall, with the historic portraits of its founder and benefactors looking down from its walls, and with a plentiful garnishing of holly, ivy and mistletoe to do honour to Christmas. At the high-table sits the Provost and those of the fellows who remain up during the Christmas Vacation, and occupying the rest of the available space

is a company of about five hundred miscellaneous persons fortunate enough to have secured admission tickets. At five o'clock a trumpet is sounded, and I may say that this is the usual summons to dinner at the college on all occasions. This is succeeded by a hush of expectation, and then, in the stillness, the opening line of the Boar's Head Carol is heard as the procession leaves the buttery. In the forefront, as it enters the hall, is the college organist, baton in hand, conducting the chorus ; then comes the college choir, in their surplices, strengthened by other musical members of the college ; and, lastly, the Boar's Head, generally weighing about 70 lbs., on a massive silver charger borne on the shoulders of two of the college officials, with a follower at the rear to keep the dish steady. In addition to being "bedeck'd with bays and rosemary," it is adorned with a crown, itself more than a century old, several small silk flags, on which the college arms are emblazoned, branches of gilded holly, laurel, etc., and, with its projecting tusks and a large lemon in its distended jaws, it looks both fierce and truculent, and in all respects a dish fit to set before a king or a provost. On the right-hand side of the head walks the solo-vocalist, who is usually the precentor or one of the fellows. During the singing of each verse, to a very quaint old chant, the procession halts, moving on when the chorus is given.

The following are the words of the Boar's Head Carol :

"The boar's head in hand bear I  
Bedeck'd with bays and rosemary,  
And I pray you masters merry be,  
Quotquot estis in convivio.

*Chorus :* Caput Apri defero  
Reddens laudes Domino.

"The boar's head as I understand  
Is the bravest dish in all the land,  
Being thus bedeck'd with a gay garland,  
Let us servire cantico.

Caput Apri, etc.

"Our steward has provided this  
In honour of the king of bliss,  
Which on this day to be served is  
In reginensi Atrio.

Caput Apri, etc."

In this manner the procession passes through the centre of the hall to the high-table, and the dainty dish is set before the provost; after which all those not invited to remain and partake leave the diners to enjoy the feast.

The origin of the celebration, according to tradition, is sufficiently striking to be worth quoting, especially as it commemorates an act of valour of one of the students of the college. While walking in the neighbouring forest of Shotover, during that period of history known as "once upon a time," and employing his mind by studying Aristotle, as well as exercising his legs, he was suddenly attacked by a wild boar. The furious beast came open-mouthed upon the youth, who, however, instead of turning tail, very courageously and with remarkable presence of mind, rammed the book he was reading down the boar's throat, exclaiming as he did so, "*Græcum est*"; thereby choking the savage with the sage and imparting information to the former at the same time.

There is another custom peculiar to this college. On the morning of every New Year's Day the bursar presents to each member of the society a needle and thread, accompanying the gift with the injunction, "Take this and be thrifty." The practice is said to have been founded on a rather fanciful derivation of the name of the founder, Eglesfield, from the French *aiguille*, needle, and *fil*, thread.

Nobody now, outside Drury Lane Theatre, where the Baddeley cake is still cut, troubles about Twelfth Day, but it was one of my looked-forward-to delights, as a youngster, to go the round of the confectioners' shops to gaze upon the twelfth cakes, with their coating of white sugar, pink ornamentation and plaster of Paris figures—which we were expressly told never to eat—coloured to the life. As for the brilliantly coloured sheets of Twelfth Night characters, you can only find them now in old scrap-books, which collectors are on the look-out for. If you were fortunate enough, as I was, to be invited to an evening party on that night, one of its features was the drawing of lots for the characters, an exciting proceeding, as you were expected to maintain the reputation of whatever distinguished individual fate had allotted to you and to act

accordin', which, like the Mikado's penalties, was usually provocative of much "innocent merriment."

The night previous to the annual celebration was a time for a bit of gambling in the shape of raffles for the cakes. As it was an illegal transaction, being a lottery, pure and simple, it had to be conducted in a very hole-and-corner fashion, which made it all the more attractive. The baker or confectioner who had cakes he was desirous of parting with confided to a few of his customers, especially those of tender years, whom he knew he could trust, that on a certain evening they would have an opportunity of acquiring some of the delicacies referred to by means of a game of chance, which was about as killing a bait as any known to humanity. On the appointed night, after the shop was shut, we were ushered on arrival—yes, I was one of them—into the bakehouse, a very gloomy apartment below the level of the street, but where secluded privacy for surreptitious transactions could be counted upon. A solitary tallow candle feebly illuminated the anxious countenances of the juvenile gamblers as they stood round a small table. After allowing a little grace for laggards, the owner of the cakes produced a dice-box and dice, and then the suppressed excitement was terrific, for the critical moment had come. The highest throw won, and when the principal cake was disposed of the maker had others at hand to be won, so, as he put it, "the company might have a little more sport and keep the ball a-rollin'." These supplementary proceedings usually lasted till we had parted company with the last bit of pocket-money we had left. The winners, among whom I was never numbered, walked away with their heads in the air and the cakes under their arms. The rest of us mournfully followed, reckoning up, as we went, the number of real good things we might have bought if we had not been beguiled into that gloomy bakehouse. I had a bit of the gambling instinct in me in my early youth, but my invariable ill-luck fortunately cured me of any such propensity some time before I ever reached man's estate, and, I am thankful to say, I have never been sufficiently tempted to revert to it.

Whoever gets a Valentine nowadays? And yet I

remember the time when I should have been woefully disappointed if I had failed to have a batch of such communications from my sisters, my cousins, and my aunts; apart from others who shall be nameless. Now the observance of Valentine's Day has so completely died out that it falls naturally into my budget of reminiscences of things that were. It held its own for a goodly period. Pepys, in an entry dated 1667 in his Diary, says: "This morning came up to my wife's bedside, little Will Mercer, to be her valentine, and brought her name writ upon blue paper in gold letters done by himself very pretty, and we were both well pleased with it." I have still by me some of the valentines sent to me in the early fifties, and I value them as relics of a distant past and also for their associations. He must be dead to all sentiment who could bring himself to analyse in a critical spirit a versification so frank and free in affectionate expression, or the pictorial accompaniments of hearts, darts, love-knots, turtle-doves and Cupids, which, with a lace-paper background, formed so appropriate a medium for breathing love-vows. Valentines are now promoted to that position of dignity only attained by objects which have ceased to fulfil their original purpose, viz. to be coveted by collectors. A second-hand bookseller's catalogue reminds me that I can have quite a nice collection of Valentines "all in the finest possible state" for twelve guineas. But I am not to be tempted, for I have no hope of finding that lost one from Anastatia among them. So long, however, as Sam Weller lives in literature, which will be for ever and a day, so long will the memory of valentines be perpetuated. When they held sway there were no Christmas Cards, and perhaps, after all, we have not lost much by the exchange.

There is still one spot in the kingdom where May Day is held in happy remembrance, and is ushered in in a harmonious and picturesque fashion—the summit of Magdalen College Tower, Oxford. I have been among the privileged few permitted to be present at the annual celebration, so I can speak of it from experience. The limited space on the tower was occupied by the college choir, men and boys, in surplices, and as many visitors as room could be found

for. As the last stroke of five died upon the breeze, all heads were reverently uncovered, and the singers, amid deep silence, poured forth the solemn old Latin hymn, in honour of the Holy Trinity, "Te Deum patrem colimus." At its close a series of discordant blasts, from the tin May horns blown by boys below, contrasted with the delightful harmony which had just ceased. But the joyous welcome to spring rung out from the tower, which, as Anthony à Wood says, "containeth the most tuneable and melodious ring of bells in all these parts and beyond," goes far to drown the (anything but) "concord of sweet sounds" beneath. Many, loath to depart, lingered on the tower for some time, listening to the music of the bells, and feasting on the exquisitely varied prospect of tower and steeple, hill and dale, field and wood stretched out before them. The poet has written :

"The college of the lily leaves her sleep,  
The grey tower rocks and trembles into sound."

This is literally true, for during this merry pealing the tower vibrated to and fro, rocking from side to side in a manner most perceptible to those on it.

The custom originated in a mass or requiem, which before the Reformation was annually performed on the tower for the soul of Henry VII., and in commemoration of his visit to the college in 1488. After the Reformation glees and madrigals were substituted, referring to which Anthony à Wood very quaintly says : "The choral Ministers of this House do, according to an ancient custom, salute Flora every year on the First of May, at four in the morning, with vocal music of several parts. Which, having been sometimes well performed, hath given great content to the neighbourhood and auditors underneath." A work on Oxford, published about a century ago, speaking of the custom having originated in a requiem, says : "But now it is a merry Concert of both Vocal and Instrumental Music, consisting of several merry Ketches, and lasting two Hours, and is concluded with Ringing the Bells. The Clerks and Choristers, with the rest of the Performers, are for their Pains allow'd a Side of Lamb, etc., for their Breakfast."

At the present time the Rector of Slymbridge pays the annual sum of £10, for the breakfast and dinner to the singers. More than one poet has given expression to the thoughts evoked by so beautiful a heralding in on Magdalen Tower of that "sweet moment of the year when first the season's hopes appear," and Holman Hunt depicted the scene on canvas.

The practice indulged in by schoolboys on May Day, and some time previous to it, of going about blowing horns seems to have been formerly, if it is not at present, almost peculiar to Oxford. Aubrey, in his *Remains of Gentilesme and Judaisme*, MS. Lansd. 266, f. 5, says: "Memorandum.—At Oxford the boys do blow cows' horns and hollow canes all night; and on May Day the young maids of every parish carry about garlands of flowers, which afterwards they hang up in their churches." And Hearne, in his preface to *Robert of Gloucester's Chronicle*, writes: "'Tis no wonder, therefore, that upon the jollities upon the first of May formerly, the custom of blowing with, and drinking in, horns so much prevailed, which, though it be now generally disused, yet the custom of blowing them prevails at this season, even to this day, at Oxford, to remind people of the pleasantness of that part of the year."

Jack-in-the-green and his sooty satellites have almost passed into the limbo of forgetfulness; yet I have seen many a dancing-party of this description, and many a pretty floral garland borne by children on the first of May. Now the only observers of the day seem to be the unkempt, bedraggled youngsters, who "welcome in the May" with discordant cries and the shuffling of feet on our doorsteps.

It is curious how many ancient customs cease to be observed in the course of a single lifetime and how many of our social habits materially alter during the same period. No one now, except perhaps a handful of Stuart devotees, gives the slightest heed to May 29th, "Restoration Day." Yet in my early days there were celebration services in the parish churches, and the Mayor and Corporation offered up their devotions in state at the City Church. If a boy

went to school that morning without a bit of "shig-shag"—as the oak-leaves were called—in his jacket, he was well pinched for his omission, as I have reason to remember. Oak-apples *au naturel* and also covered with gold or silver leaf, were on sale at the market stalls, and I myself, to be on the safe side, have flaunted the most ornate specimen I could get in my buttonhole. It is somewhat singular that the necessity for wearing it expired at noon on the 29th, and you were not only not penalized after that hour for lack of it but were told to put it out of sight if you were found wearing it; the reason for this time-limitation I could never discover, unless it was that Charles had got out of the oak tree by that hour.

Again the Corporation used to wend their way to church on "Gunpowder Plot Day," and, until the Crimean War, Guy Fawkes could be seen in effigy in nearly every street. However, in 1854, the Emperor Nicholas supplanted him as an object of animadversion. But an effigy of anybody is nowadays a *rara avis* on November 5th. Until the early seventies, when the "peelers," the successors of the old watchmen, were superseded by an efficient constabulary, the night of November 5th saw many pitched battles between gown and town, resulting in not a few damaged countenances and disordered garments. I very well remember how, on one occasion, the Mayor was so perturbed when he heard that the battle in the "High" and the "Corn" was being waged with unusual fierceness that he sallied forth himself in order to interpose the full weight of his authority in the cause of law and order. Alas for the frailty of human wishes and human nature! Within ten minutes he returned to the Municipal Buildings with ample proof that he had mingled in the fray, in the shape of an eye unmistakably in mourning. An undergrad, recognizing in his Worship merely one of his hereditary foes, went for him at once, and succeeded in planting his fist where it would be most effective. The Mayor in question, whose friendship I enjoyed, was a kind-hearted and useful citizen, but somewhat impulsive in disposition, and was penalized accordingly. Your undergraduate is no respecter of persons unless they have the whip-hand of him, which

Mayors have not. Even in latter days—at least before the war—a few “freshers” would shout a challenge in the streets on the Fifth, and it would meet with some response, but proctors and police combined could soon settle matters their own way.

One never hears now of the mummers putting in an appearance, though possibly they do in some remote parts of the country. I saw them, as a child, perform that ancient of plays, “St. George and the Dragon,” with its doggerel rhymes and unaccountable incongruities. Morris dancing has been resuscitated of late years, though one does not see the performers footing it in the streets as they did in my young days. The customs which seem to be most long-lived pertain to eating, for some of us still regale ourselves with pancakes on Shrove Tuesday; salt fish on Ash Wednesday; frumerty or firmity on mid-Lent Sunday; hot-cross buns on Good Friday; lamb on Easter Day; goose on Michaelmas Day; and turkey or roast beef on Christmas Day. But I doubt if everybody now is as strict as my father was in seeing that the aforesaid eatables were duly forthcoming on the appointed days.

## CHAPTER VIII

Some Municipal Customs—The Civic Drummer and Fifer—The Making of a Freeman—Almsmen of Bartlemas—"Going the Franchise."

A VERY old and interesting custom used to be observed in connection with elections, both parliamentary and municipal, in my childhood's days, and which, so far as I have been able to ascertain, was peculiar to the City of Oxford. I remember, as I lay in my little crib, hearing the deep tones of the funeral bell of the City Church, known as St. Martin's or Carfax Church, which solemnly tolled from seven to eight o'clock on an election morning. At eight o'clock the knell ceased, and then I heard the shrill notes of a fife and the tap-tap of a side-drum, and this fetched me out of bed to the window. I was rewarded by seeing the city drummer and fifer, who were in those days recognized Corporation officials, starting from the Town Hall to make the round of the city. I can see now the tall, lanky form of the drummer, who was known as "Long Drury," and who for physical reasons dragged one leg behind the other, which materially interfered with the effectiveness of his gait and the rate of his progression. When he was not engaged in abstracting music from the civic drum he was looking after a trade in which he was interested. Alongside of him marched the city fifer, who was a short individual, and commonly known as "Podge," though whether this was his proper name or one bestowed upon him by his fellow-citizens, I am unable to say.

This musical perambulation originated in times when there were less means than now for notifying public matters, and was designed to remind the freemen in various parts of the city that it was their duty to come up and vote. Alas, the musicians and their instruments have long disappeared,

and but few remember them ! Some twenty or so years ago I endeavoured, in a company of citizens, to elicit some corroborative evidence with respect to the old custom. Only one of those present had any knowledge of it, but he testified as to the accuracy of my memory from his own recollection. It was a link with a long-buried past which seems worth preserving if only for the sake of its picturesque suggestiveness. I remember asking my father why the city bell tolled so mournfully on election mornings, and he said it was an anticipatory tribute to the memory of the poor souls who would suffer defeat and lose their seats later on in the day. My spirits were afterwards not a little cheered when the poll closed at four o'clock, and the city bells rang joyous peals in honour of the victors.

I am, in my own person, a relic of an ancient past inasmuch as I am a freeman of the City of Oxford, where they still retain more rights and privileges than in many other municipalities. In the old days, but not further back than those of my grandfather, no one could vote or set up in business in the city unless he were a freeman, and there were other disadvantages if you belonged not to this privileged class. Freedom of the city was obtainable either by birth, viz. by being the son of a freeman, by apprenticeship, or by putting what was known as a bond in the City Chest, which meant the payment of a fee of £40 to the City Treasurer. My father was a freeman by birth, and this entitled me to take up my freedom as soon as I was twenty-one, which I forthwith did. I was summoned to appear before the Mayor and other magistrates, when, having been put upon my oath, I solemnly swore to do all manner of things and to abstain from doing as many others. The oath embraced a long and quaintly worded series of undertakings and contained some few things not comprehensible by my understanding. I swore to be faithful and true to our Sovereign Lady Queen Victoria, her heirs, etc., to be obedient and ready to the Mayor, Aldermen, Ministers and Keepers of this city and to their lawful commandments and to keep and maintain the franchises, liberties and customs of the city. All this was plain sailing enough, but then I went on to pledge myself to avow no

foreign goods as my own whereby the Queen might lose her custom. I did promise and vow not to consent to the decrease of the City Treasure without the assent of the Mayor and of his Council, and not to purloin any of the city charters, writings, evidences, scripts or muniments. Without having the most distant idea of what it meant, I undertook to be "partner of all manner of charges touching this city; as in summons, contributions, watches, taxes, tallages," and I swore with a light heart to do a good many other things which, like the Heathen Chinees, "I did not understand."

I little thought when I was pledging myself so devotedly to maintain at all hazards and against all comers the rights and privileges of my native city, that years afterwards in a similar court of justice at Bath, I should be swearing fealty to another city on taking up the office of its Chief Magistrate. It was a matter of relief to me to feel on that occasion that no subject of difference was likely to arise between the two municipalities, because otherwise I might have been in the embarrassing position of being suddenly called upon to take up arms on behalf of both bodies. As it was, I had the happy consciousness that I was something in the nature of a link between two historic cities, each one in its particular way unique and each one deriving its fame from its classic associations and its architectural beauties.

The main point on the first occasion was that the Mayor and magistrates considered that I swore sufficiently for the purpose, and so, after I had been relieved of 7s. 6d. as a fee, I was formally admitted to all the rights and privileges of a full-fledged freeman. The Mayor having congratulated me, one of his brother magistrates remarked that he was afraid it meant "a vote to the other side," an observation which, knowing his politics, I did not think it worth while to contradict. Outside the court I found some brother freemen, who looked old enough to have taken up their freedom when the city first received its charter, awaiting me with such solicitude regarding my health as only drink at my expense could assuage.

The freedom not only gave me a vote but also the right

to turn out horses and cattle on a large tract of land known as Port Meadow, just outside the city, and likewise rendered me eligible for all kinds of civic charities if I fell upon evil days.

The chief advantage to me, however, was the vote it bestowed, for it is the most delightful franchise you can possess, inasmuch as it is practically free from all conditions except that you must reside either in the city or within four miles of it. Subject to this residential qualification, you can move from house to house without its affecting your vote, and in fact you need not live in a house at all, as there is no rental qualification required. If you are living on the rates in the workhouse you can demand to be let out to vote; in fact, the only residence which you are not privileged to leave for voting purposes is the gaol, for the term of your sentence cannot be interrupted to permit of your exercising the franchise. Personally, although I am a freeman, I cannot defend this franchise, except from an antiquarian point of view, for I am unable to see why any one should have the right to vote simply because he is the son of his father, a circumstance over which he cannot be said to have had any particular control.

One of the duties formerly devolving upon a freeman was a regular attendance at a specified place of worship, for, in Elizabeth's reign, the City Council enacted that "all freemen of the city shall every Sunday and holiday come to the sermon at Carfax with their wives and families as many as can be spared," and they were ordered to wait outside the east end of the church until the arrival of the Mayor and escort him in. There was a fine of 12*d.* payable by a freeman every time he omitted to attend. These orders show that after the Reformation a municipal council claimed and exercised the right to direct the religious life of the citizens and their families.

If you were a freeman of the city, you were eligible for many different charities and for election as an Almsman of Bartlemas, which meant an allowance of so much a week for life, and consequently it was a position much sought after. The first selection of candidates was made at a City Council, but the voting was confined to those members

who were themselves freemen. The selection of two candidates having thus been made, the Mayor proceeded to the balcony overlooking the Town Hall yard, in which yard the great body of freemen were assembled, and announced to them the result of the poll in the Council for the two candidates selected. The freemen then themselves made the election by means of a poll. The qualifications for the charity may be inferred from those stated at a meeting of the Council in my own time. One candidate was recommended on the ground that he had a good name, an honest character and a wooden leg. The best that could be said of his opponent was that he was of great height, being known as "long Drury," and was an accomplished musician, proved by the fact that he was the city drummer. The wooden leg, however, carried the day by a majority of nearly two to one.

The most singular feature about the whole affair was the ceremony following the election, and which, had I not witnessed it myself, I could never have believed could have been tolerated in one's own time. Immediately after the fortunate candidate had secured the charity, he was taken possession of by his brother-freemen, who, having decorated his person, reddened his cheeks, gilded his forehead, and put on his head a cocked-hat with a carrot stuck in it, then placed him in a chair in which, preceded by the city drummer and fifer, playing "See the conquering hero comes," he was carried shoulder-high three times round Carfax, followed by many of his brother-freemen, and amid the shouting of the tag-rag and bob-tail assembled to grace the spectacle, which was in emulation of the chairing of the parliamentary members. After the chairing, the successful candidate with his friends adjourned to a public house, with a view to liquidating as much as possible of the charity in advance in a fuddle which lasted out the day. Happily, this piece of tomfoolery is now numbered among those customs "more honoured in the breach than the observance."

One of the most interesting and enjoyable of old customs, in which I have ever had a hand, was what was termed "going the franchise," being an elaborate and glorified

version of "beating the boundaries," and I think it is worthy of a record, not only on account of its singularity but also as showing the conscientious way in which an old ceremony used to be carried out. The City of Oxford has a most extensive boundary, as it owns property for some miles outside the city itself in more than one direction. In my time, it was customary to "go the franchise" about once in every four years, but I believe that the custom has fallen into desuetude. The Mayor and Sheriff were always the initiators and leaders of the expedition charged with the duty of seeing that none of the municipal landmarks had been tampered with. They had also the privilege of dispensing, at their own cost, a good deal of hospitality on the occasion to all the members of the Corporation and civic officials, as well as to as many of their private friends as they might choose to invite. The proceedings lasted the whole day, for they involved making a circuit of about sixteen miles, part of the journey being accomplished on foot and the rest by water. A start was made from the Town Hall at nine o'clock in the morning, the procession consisting of the Mayor, Sheriff and Aldermen fully robed and cock-hatted, and the other members of the Corporation and invited guests, preceded by a band, the city maces and the city flag.

At Magdalen Bridge, the first halting-place, robes, cocked-hats, the band, barring the city drummer and fifer, and all the maces, except the chief one, were shed, and thus disencumbered the party crossed country fields to the banks of the Isis. Here the Mayoress with her attendant ladies awaited, in one of the large barges, the coming of the party. When we had all embarked on board the barge, horses towed us up the river to the "Freewater Stone," the first instalment of hospitality being dispensed from the city grace cups on the way. On arrival at the stone, we found seated on it the oldest of the city freemen, who, as he holds rank as "the King of the Slayonians," was attired in his crown and robes, and surrounded by his court of brother-freemen. The barge having been moored alongside, we all landed to pay our respects to His Majesty, who received us in the most friendly spirit. The Mayor, having

done obeisance, according to ancient custom and usage, wished His Majesty health, long life and prosperity, and paid tribute in the shape of a guinea and a bottle of gin, which the King graciously accepted, and even went so far as to shake hands with the Mayor. Then the grace cups were passed round, and the King proposed the health of the Mayor, who responded. "God save the Queen" by the drum and fife, followed by three cheers for the Queen, concluded this portion of the ceremony, and we re-embarked.

On arriving at the point of embarkation we all cleared out of the barge, and the ladies left us. Then began the most adventurous part of the day, when hedges, ditches and streams had to be negotiated, and it was not easy to escape a ducking either in crossing a frail plank or in scrambling into an over-full punt. At each of the boundary stones—and there were many—the mace-bearer placed the base of the mace on the stone, the flag-bearer being at his side, and called for three cheers for the Queen, and the National Anthem was played to uncovered heads. Then we moved on to the next stone. We had a considerable following of the commonalty, known as "toddlers," who attended uninvited, and these were treated to bread and cheese and beer at a hostelry where a halt was made. By three o'clock, we had reached the outlying village of Wolvercote, which terminated our mission in that direction, and in a large marquee on Port Meadow, the freemen's freehold, we found a bountiful repast, provided by the Mayor and Sheriff, awaiting us, which we considered we had fully earned by our exertions. Here the wine-cup freely circulated, and when the time arrived to make a fresh start most of us were ready to dare and do anything. It was an unwritten law that every new freeman must, at some time or another, be made "free of the city water." The first time I "went the franchise" was not very long after I had taken up my freedom; consequently I was a marked man on this particular day, but up to the time of the Wolvercote interregnum I had managed to baffle every effort to christen me. However, braced up by the Mayor and Sheriff's hospitality, I lost count of danger, and became more reckless than discreet. So, unmindful of

consequences, I ventured on a plank across a ditch, when I had it all to myself. To the watchful ones this was the auspicious moment, and, before I realized the risk I ran, a gentle tip of the plank was quite sufficient to make me "free of the city water," amid approving cheers. After that, there were many adventurous and hilarious moments, till we arrived once more at Magdalen Bridge, having thus made, by the time darkness had set in, the complete circuit of the city boundaries. We were met by the full band, and the Mayor, Sheriff and Aldermen having once more attired themselves in their robes and cocked-hats, we processioned up "the High," accompanied by a large and miscellaneous crowd, to the Town Hall. Here, after mutual congratulations upon our survival after so many hairbreadth escapes, and several of us much wetter than when we started, we separated with longing hopes of having just such another day of irresponsible jollity some years hence.

As evidence that "going the franchise" was not entirely free from risks, I may mention that my father often told me of his own lucky escape when once taking part in the observance of the custom. He was about to embark in a punt, in which already were the Mayor, the mace-bearer and mace and sundry Aldermen, when, as it occurred to him that it was already quite full enough, he refrained from adding his weight. A more trustful Councillor, thinking that it was a pity to lose a place in this way, jumped from the shore into the frail boat. It was the last straw that broke the camel's back, and, though the punt put up with the addition till it reached mid-stream, its patience was then exhausted, and, unmindful of its sacred cargo, it sank with all aboard. Fortunately, all the human occupants were safely rescued, but there was no little distress when it was found that the mace was missing. Its bearer, with all his love for this emblem of the city's sovereignty, was not prepared to sacrifice his precious life by sticking to it, when he and it disappeared beneath the wave, so he promptly let it go. Thus set free, it sought a temporary resting-place in the bed of the river, whence it was soon fished up, but minus a small decoration at its

apex, which, so far as anybody knows, is embedded still in the sandy soil of the Cherwell. Happily, this was the culminating incident of the day, for it occurred during the last stage of the voyage. The spectacle of the dripping municipal dignitaries, who so evidently had been made free of the city water, as they wended their way in procession to the Town Hall, was one which afforded unbounded delight to the proletariat who have no respect for persons.

I hope, when the War is over, some large-hearted Mayor, with Sheriff to match, will revive this ancient and delectable observance—minus, of course, the punt episode. I cannot undertake in my old age to stand the racket of such a day as I have endeavoured to describe, so I am not fishing for an invitation, but I should delight in hearing of it, and in comparing the latter-day doings with those of my frolicsome youth.

## CHAPTER IX

Old Educational Methods and their Defects—A Schoolboy's Experiences—  
Local Examinations—The Cult of the Stick—Scholastic Treadmills—  
Terpsichorean Tribulations.

I DO not for a moment intend to furnish a dissertation on education, a subject which has exercised the brains and pens of so many experts who agree to differ and will probably continue to differ until the millennium. I have not only no pretensions to be considered an expert, but am sufficiently conscious of my own educational shortcomings as to be always endeavouring to rectify them; a task which will engage me till the end of life's chapter, or as long as reason lasts. But, in recalling one's experiences of the days of Victoria, one could not well omit all reference to educational deficiencies and developments, so far as they came within one's own purview.

When one looks back upon one's schooldays, one realizes how far we have advanced since then in the matter of education. So far as system and method and qualifications of teachers are concerned, the schools of my boyhood, speaking generally, were immeasurably below the ordinary rate-supported school of to-day. It is true that you had in the great public schools of the country many fine classical scholars teaching, and if every boy who came under their care was marked out for a university career they were well able to put him in the way of it. But, as this was not the case, there was a great deal of misplaced time and energy which would have been better bestowed by both masters and boys upon subjects of greater utility to the latter in after-life. So far as middle-class schools were concerned, they were in many cases beneath contempt as educational mediums. If a man failed in business, he too often set

up as a schoolmaster, as it required very little capital and no credentials to speak of. The system of teaching was very much at fault in its treadmill character and in the pains apparently taken to make it as uninteresting as possible, especially at the start. It was an age of Pinnock's Catechisms and Mangnall's Questions. Teaching under such a system was as easy as shelling peas, because the teacher, with the book before him, asked the question out of it, and you had to give the stereotyped answer word for word as it was printed. If you made the slightest variation in the text, however immaterial it might be, you were turned back. I retained very little of the useless knowledge I acquired in this way, but I can call to mind the question "Who were the Ancient Britons?" and the silly answer "They were a people who inhabited these islands and stained their bodies with a weed called woad." About as superfluous and meaningless a piece of information as could be imparted to a child. We should have formed a much better idea of our ancestors if we had been told that they were a people who didn't wear coats and trousers.

Another ancient fallacy was that dates were all-important, and that knowledge of history without these was not worth entertaining. We are now, however, beginning to realize that a boy who can tell us what led to the wars of the Roses and how and why they ended, has information a deal better worth having than that possessed by a school-mate who can unhesitatingly, and with perfect accuracy, rattle off the date of every battle of that period, and then has done his best. Yet I know which of the two would have scored then, and it would not have been the first-named. Storing the memory is merely instruction, but cultivating the mind is education. As another instance of how not to do it, at my next school, geography, which was only taught once a week, was taken at the same hour as dancing. So if your parents desired that you should shine in the ball-room, the great globe on which you dwelt was a *terra incognita* to you. Most of the boys preferred the mazy dance, and influenced their parents accordingly. Having endured the ordeal of dancing-lessons, which I cordially disliked—the reason why will appear later on—

before I was promoted to "a seminary for young gentlemen," I concluded that a study of maps would be the most interesting of the two, so I was one of the select few who embarked upon it. The headmaster took this class himself, and so far as he was concerned, the method was simplicity itself. Hanging in front of us would be a large map of one of the four quarters of the Globe, and each boy had to select some place on the map and ask his next-door neighbour to find it. If the latter succeeded in doing so, it counted one to him, if he didn't it was one to the questioner. It was an idiotic way of teaching geography, because the questioner always selected the most insignificant place he could find as being the one most likely to be unknown to the respondent, or to any one else except the inhabitants thereof. The highest scorer secured the prize—an apple, often unripe, out of the master's orchard—which was the only redeeming feature of the competition; I mean the apple, not the unripeness. I could dilate at some length upon the shortcomings of the old educational system, for the examples I have given had their counterpart in most of the studies we pursued.

When I had left boarding-school, I went to a classical day-school—the Cathedral School attached to Christ Church, Oxford. It was primarily intended for the education of the choristers, but the headmaster was allowed to take private pupils in addition. This was by far the best school I attended, although it might and ought to have been infinitely better than it was. The college always appointed one of its chaplains as headmaster, and, having done this, then left the school severely alone, except when the members of the Senior Common Room, which overlooked our playground, complained of the noise we made. Beyond this, neither dean nor canons took a particle of interest either in us or our pastors and masters. We were housed in two whitewashed vaulted chambers, which, for their lack of light and ventilation, and general unsuitableness, would nowadays be summarily condemned as unfit for their purpose by any Government inspector. But the school, more by chance than owing to any discrimination on the part of the authorities, had in my time an ideal headmaster

in the Rev. James Baker, whose method of teaching was entirely opposed to anything I had previously experienced, for, discarding the principle of learning by rote, he lived to explain things and to draw us out, as it were, in the doing of it.

On this principle, for one of our lessons we had several pages of history in a narrative form given us to get up. When the task was first set me, I was staggered, and said to one of my schoolmates, "I can't possibly learn all this by heart in the time." With schoolboy freedom, he informed me that I was a little fool if I tried. And then I learnt that all we had to do was to read the portion set sufficiently attentively to stand an examination upon it. Instead of being tied down to other people's exact words, we had to answer in our own phraseology any questions put to us; this taught us readiness of speech as well as history. James Baker was the only headmaster, out of three of whom I had personal experience, who not only knew his business but carried it out in a spirit of such sympathetic broad-mindedness as made us fellow-workers with him. As an illustration of this, once a fortnight the whole school assembled for what was termed "common knowledge," and then with the aid of suitable apparatus, pictures and diagrams, he expounded, in a way comprehensible to our understanding, the leading principles, and their application, of those sciences which bore most directly upon our ordinary life; sometimes varying this by discoursing upon some leading topic of the day of a non-political character. We all looked forward with delight to these expositions and never missed them if we could help it.

He was a master of the Arnold type, as the following incident will show. He was a keen geologist, and his talks to the school upon the subject induced me to make a study of it and thereby added to my pleasures, as I found it a delightful hobby. One day, when we had a whole holiday, a kindred spirit and myself planned between ourselves a fossil-hunting expedition to Stonesfield, where Dr. Buckland first unearthed some marvellous antediluvian monsters. To reach it we had first to take train, and then walk some way into the country. On the station-platform

from which we started we found to our surprise our headmaster awaiting us, who, having got wind of our intention, asked if he might join us. We welcomed his company with the utmost gladness, for we rejoiced to see as much of him as possible. He beguiled the way with fascinating converse, piloted us among the quarries, and showed us what to look out for, and then sat down with us at a wayside inn to a regular country meal at his expense. I remember how proud and pleased I was to find myself actually sitting alongside and feeding on equal terms with one whom I looked up to and revered. After getting back at the end of a long day's real enjoyment, the kind-hearted man took us to his rooms in the college, further refreshed us, and then out of his geological store, presented each of us with a number of specimens for our own collections, as a memento of our day together; and a truly red-letter day it was, full of happy recollections.

I had a hankering after geology when I was at the previous school, but it was nipped in the bud, because the study of it was forbidden on the ground that it was detrimental to the stone walls in the neighbourhood. In their abysmal ignorance, the authorities imagined that geologists derived their main spoils from such sources.

Alas, death claimed our master all too soon, for he was a comparatively young man when he passed away, to my deep grief. Outside my own family there was no one I loved so much, and his death was one of the great sorrows of my life. I had previously suffered under a discipline of fear, for I had neither esteem nor regard for either of my preceding headmasters, and not a single pleasant recollection attaching to them. So the coming into my life of one who was to me not only a teacher to be obeyed but a friend to be loved was a new and delightful experience, and it was sufficiently a revelation to induce me to remodel my ideas regarding schoolmasters generally.

I have recalled these old recollections of my school-days—which many persons may think very trivial—because I want to emphasize the advantages of a system, which is more and more being generally followed, that recognizes that there can be something of a co-partnership

between the master and pupil. I do not for a moment suggest that this is a modern discovery, for there were teachers, of whom I have given an example, in the old days who practised the principle, but they were the exception and not the rule. Boys are not all ungrateful imps of mischief, though the old system, with the cane, or something worse, as the main stimulus, went far to make them so. The Boy Scout movement is an eye-opener as to boys' possibilities. It recognizes the capacity of the human boy to be of service to the world at large, and has thereby given him a status he never before possessed. The effect has been to sharpen the wits of the dense and dull boys, and to direct the energies of the sharp boys, always liable to be mischief makers, into useful channels. After all, mischief is mainly energy wrongly utilized, and if that energy can be directed into some useful and beneficial channel it must be a good thing for the community as well as the boy. A boy has a natural yearning to do something, and Shakespeare has hit off the character of the boy-scout when he said: "O 'tis a parlous boy, bold, quick, ingenious, forward, capable."

The most important step for the improvement of middle-class education taken in my own time was the establishment of the Oxford and Cambridge Local Examinations. These properly tested the extent of the knowledge imparted at a school, and showed how a school was fulfilling its mission. The first effect of these examinations was to demonstrate that certain schools of no great repute were doing infinitely better work than others whose previous success in examinations—of their own devising—had been trumpeted to the world. As the value of an impartial test, under the ægis of the two principal universities, of educational work was gradually understood and appreciated, many of the unfit schools were weeded out. The system of private examinations was to my own knowledge in many cases little better than an absolute fraud, a friendly examiner being appointed, who, knowing what was expected of him, acted accordingly and found everything absolutely satisfactory. Schoolmasters often knew not their own deficiencies, and were ignorant of what constituted a sound system of education

suitable for those who had to make their way in the world by means of a trade or profession. But these University examinations conducted by competent examiners, free of any suspicion of partiality, not only encouraged good schools but set a standard to work up to. The West may take some pride in the thought that it was a Devonshire squire, the late Sir Thomas Dyke Acland, in whose fertile brain this examination scheme originated. With the aid of other influential educationists, especially Mr. Temple, then one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools, afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury, who rendered essential help in piloting the scheme at Oxford, it was brought to a successful issue. It was a local society which Sir Thomas made the medium for giving what was in his mind to the world, for he first expounded it in the *Journal of the Bath and West Agricultural Society*, in 1856, and followed this up by laying it before a meeting of the Society's Council, by whom it was cordially endorsed.

As secretary and editor of the Society I was in frequent communication with Sir Thomas, who was chairman of our Journal Committee. I rejoice that this resulted in my enjoying the friendship and confidence of one of the most brilliant and versatile of men—he took a double-first at Oxford at the same time as Gladstone did—and the most charming of hosts, and enabled me to contribute to the Society's Journal a brief memoir embodying my own personal recollections of so notable a personality.

The first annual report of the Delegacy on the result of the examinations amply justified the new departure. It admitted that several candidates gave proof of being well taught under the old system, and then went on to say :

“There was often a tolerably wide range of information and sometimes no small amount of original thought ; but candidates who showed both these frequently showed little power of putting their information together, and still less power of expressing it in clear language. There seemed to be in many instances all the materials of a good education, but not the form.”

This was the natural result of the system pursued at two out of the three schools to which I have referred from

my own experience. A man or a boy may be crammed full of facts and figures acquired by rote, but unless he can assimilate them and give expression to them in suitable terms, much of his knowledge is, so far as utilizing it is concerned, necessarily wasted. The main object of education is to teach; not to give examination-tips, and not to sacrifice everything to the earning of grants.

Nobody realizes more fully than myself how much better I should have been had I taken greater advantage than I did of the educational fare the gods provided, though, looking at it dispassionately, I do not think I suffered so much from lack of industry as from lack of interest due, in my earlier schools, to inefficient direction. Hence, I occupied my mind out of school hours with all kinds of other studies, not excluding that embodied in the term "human nature." Owing to the exceptional opportunities I had of seeing much more of the outer world and of all sorts and conditions of men than usually falls to the lot of youth, I accumulated a good deal of material, founded mainly on observation, that was very useful to me in after-life. If any one has the patience to read these random recollections to the bitter end, he will have seen how much variety there has been in my occupations, although I have not enumerated them all, and looking back brings home to me how much what might be described as the non-essentials of education have helped me in after-life to discharge the responsibilities entrusted to me. Probably if, as Locke would put it, I had been intended for the university instead of the world, Providence would have seen to it that my scholastic training was on different lines from those of which I had experience. I am very willing to be called "a smatterer" when I remember how much the possession of the weakness which entitled me to be so called has enlarged the area of one's recreations and thereby added to the pleasures of life. Cosmopolitanism in taste means that science, art and literature can each and all be made to minister to our enjoyment, and that libraries, museums, picture-galleries, concert-rooms, lecture-halls, theatres are so many temples of delights wherein the soul can be strengthened and the mind refreshed,

So far as the wage-earning classes are concerned, the great event of the Victorian era was the passing of the Education Act of 1870, but during the period to which I have limited my recollections it did not come sufficiently within my purview to justify my doing more than referring to it, although I took considerable interest in the controversies that arose in connection with it. At that time I shared the views of many others that the Act insufficiently recognized the religious wants of those for whose benefit it was intended, but since then, having had some hand in its administration, I cannot but realize that, with all its faults, it has been of great benefit to the country. Whilst experience has only confirmed me in the view that a parent has the right to demand that his child shall be educated in the faith in which he has been brought up, no rate-supported school that I know of can be fairly accused of providing only a "godless education."

We have advanced in other respects than those I have referred to, notably in a diminished reliance upon the power of the stick to stimulate learning. Including my first school, presided over by a lady, I had the diversified experience of four schools, and only one of them boasted that corporal punishment was dispensed with. But at this school I have seen a master who had an ungovernable temper more than once knock a boy down, and I feared him much more than any teacher who had command of a birch or cane. I think corporal punishment within reason is very suitable and proper, because there are some natures which cannot be brought to reason in any other way, but it should be exercised with discrimination and in a judicial spirit. The funniest administration of it I ever heard of was in vogue at my first school, presided over by a dear, simple-minded lady, who really taught me a great deal. She was very anxious to put down talking in school hours, so she procured a large piece of cardboard, on which on a bright yellow ground was inscribed in large letters the words "For Talking," a string being attached to it for suspension purposes. When school commenced our mistress held possession of this badge, and directly she heard one of us talking she flung it to him, and he had to hang it

round his neck. Directly he caught one of his school-mates guilty of the same offence, he promptly parted with the badge and threw it across to him for his personal adornment. This went on concurrently with our studies, when as we neared high noon, at which hour morning school closed, the excitement was intense. This is explainable when I say that the last one who wore the distinguishing mark had to remain behind to pay the penalty for himself and any offenders who had preceded him. If, having talked, you could only dispose of your decoration before 12 o'clock struck, you were all right, otherwise your presence was desired in private and the cane then fulfilled its appointed mission, not merely on account of one's loquacity but for being so silly as to give tongue last. This is a very good illustration of a system which, instead of considering surrounding circumstances and the peculiar idiosyncrasies of individual boys, included them all in one category, and then left matters to work themselves out by automatic action.

The treadmill method found fine scope for its application in the case of languages, which, not being taught conversationally, were of little use in a foreign country. We slaved away at regular and irregular verbs, and then when we went abroad abandoned all thought of them and got on much better without them when we had a tourist's conversational handbook. After all, the main object in learning a language is to make one's self understood in it. Resourcefulness is sometimes more useful than a mere mechanical acquaintance with irregular verbs. As an illustration of this, there is the case of the Yankee and the Celestial waiter. The former when dining at an hotel in China was anxious to ascertain the nature of a dish placed before him. Not knowing the language, he pointed to the dish and said, "Quack, quack." The waiter understood at once, and shaking his head responded with "Bow wow." A sudden and an expressive pantomime on the part of the Yankee induced the Chinaman to hurry out with the dish in double-quick time. If both parties had had a profound acquaintance with irregular verbs, probably the whole business would have occupied a much longer time and would not have fulfilled its purpose a bit better. My point

is that mere book-knowledge learnt by rote is not the *summum bonum* of all education—a knowledge of human nature is a bit of a help sometimes.

I am passionately fond of music, and have been from a child upwards, so they tried to make me a musician by setting me to practise scales every day in playtime for weeks together. In those days, teachers didn't produce credentials of their competency to teach, because they hadn't any. My teacher, in the intervals of scales, set me lessons out of the usual catechism-book, which saved her the trouble of herself expounding the mysteries of crotchets, quavers and such like, as it was all in the book. By the time I had been promoted to laboriously fingering out "Rousseau's Dream" and "In a cottage near a wood," and similar masterpieces, it was thought that I had not sufficient aptitude for music to practise the art properly, so it dropped out of my curriculum of studies. Yet I had enough love for it to take every opportunity of hearing those who were experts, and I think I could fairly stand an examination in the works of the chief composers and especially in the songs and ballads of the people over a long period. I went out of my way to enjoy the efforts of its chief exponents, and I think I heard nearly every singer and instrumentalist of note between 1850 and 1890, whilst I rarely missed attending the Handel Festival from the sixties onwards. So I may claim to have paid tribute to music, although my own efforts are limited to fingering out a few chords to accompany such simple songs as I could concoct myself. Happily, a much less wearisome and monotonous method of teaching the art has superseded the old one, and no one nowadays dreams of availing himself of a teacher who relies upon catechisms in preference to certificates.

I have described from my own experience some of the mistaken methods pursued in the inculcation of essential knowledge, and a system of stilted artificiality permeated most efforts at instruction. Dancing, for instance, instead of being regarded as a recreation to be enjoyed in a light-hearted spirit, was taught with so much seriousness and slavish attention to detail as to convert a mere amusement into a serious study with an unnecessary amount of physical

strain. In my very early days, there was nothing within the region of education I so heartily dreaded, or so cordially disliked, as my dancing lessons. I abhorred them even more than, later on, I did Greek—which is saying a good deal. As a child, I was very nervous and diffident, however much I have altered in this respect since I have grown up, and a very irritable dancing-mistress, who called the attention of the whole room to my many *faux pas*, no doubt had a good deal to do with my loathing of the whole business. The preliminaries were in themselves provocative of much discomfort. At some of the schools, you sat in a sort of stocks, with the object of impressing upon you the necessity of always turning your toes out. I did not undergo this, but something quite as bad, for one was supposed to rest on a hard backless form under the stern condition that your legs must on no account dangle; they must always touch bottom, otherwise the floor. This was all very well for folk who had longer legs than mine, but, in my case, it meant that I never sat at all but had to rest the hinder part of my anatomy against the sharp projecting edge of the form, with the momentary fear that I should shock all propriety by losing my balance. When I was in this state of nervous anxiety, the mistress would come round with a stick to see that everybody's toes touched the ground and were sufficiently turned out. If these conditions were inadequately complied with, the stick was the happy medium for adjusting the position. When you had undergone sufficient martyrdom in this direction, you were summoned to make an exhibition of yourself in the middle of the room.

The steps, in an ordinary quadrille, for instance, were most elaborate. The first thing was to be sure you were in exactly the proper position, toes included; then directly you began to move you had to remember that every advance, retreat, twist, and turn had its defined number of steps, neither more nor less, and woe betide you if your feet proved recalcitrant or your memory failed you, for then you were exposed to public obloquy. I shouldn't have minded this so much if the company had been all of my own sex, but the large majority were not, and it was a

terrible ordeal to be held up to scorn and ridicule in the presence of the little petticoated sylphs whom you had met out at evening parties and probably would do so again. But I will forbear further harrowing up my readers' feelings with accounts of proceedings which are as incapable of revival as those of the Star Chamber or the Inquisition. Children are happier now in living in better times than I did, and grown-ups may congratulate themselves that their toes are much more free agents under the present Terpsichorean regime than they would have been under the old system. Although I underwent untold humiliations when they tried to teach me ball-room dancing, as a young man I enjoyed an enviable reputation for step-dancing, and in my amateur theatrical days could rouse the house to enthusiasm with a walk-round or a break-down in a burlesque. This was curious—but the explanation is that my legs would never take themselves seriously, their forte being comedy, so it was nature against art. However, I improved in the legitimate dance, when I had forgotten all about the number of steps and turning my toes out.

But whilst congratulating children of the present day on escaping many of the physical discomforts of the past, I am bound to admit that some of the changes in the manners and customs of the ball-room which have come about in my time are not for the better. To my mind, the prevailing weakness of the present-day Terpsichorean scheme is its deadly monotony. You have waltz after waltz, with just an occasional two-step and one set of Lancers before, and one after, supper to vary this. Before the waltz took almost entire possession of the floor, we had the First Set, the Caledonians, the old Lancers—not the kitchen sort, as danced now—Polkas, Schottisches, Mazurkas, Cachucas, Galops, Waltzes, etc., and then to top up with either Sir Roger de Coverley or the Triumph, or often both. Dancing is now little better than a simple whirling of couples in a close embrace, as in the waltz, or something akin to a romp, as in the modern Lancers. I take no cognizance of hugs, trots and tangos, as being outside the pale. Ball-room dancing is, in fact, now more a form of exercise of a sort than an art.

## CHAPTER X

Some Election Reminiscences—How I learnt Politics—Election Manners and Customs—Bribery and Corruption—How Cardwell lost his Seat.

I HAVE always pinned my faith rather to environment than to a belief in the principle of heredity, especially in regard to Politics, although my own association with them may have been due in a minor degree to the former influence as well as to the latter.

My grandfather on my mother's side was a strong Tory, whilst my grandfather on my father's side was an equally strong Whig. Happily, in these days we are free from at least one of the calamitous influences which affected Politics at that earlier period, for then you had not only the two Political Parties I have named, but also the more serious distinction implied in the terms "King's Men" and "Queen's Men," the former supporting George IV. in his matrimonial differences and the latter backing up Queen Caroline. The Tories were, speaking generally, King's Men and the Whigs Queen's Men, the great mass of the populace being on the side of the Queen. My paternal grandfather was a Queen's Man, and was acclaimed by the populace accordingly, whilst my maternal grandfather was a King's Man, and had his windows smashed and his furniture wrecked because he would not illuminate when the Queen was acquitted. He had this consolation, however, that all the damage was made good at the cost of the rates. It seems only fair to him to say that it was not so much that he approved of the King's conduct towards his wife that made him espouse his cause but the desire to stand by the monarchy under any circumstances, and this was the feeling generally of those who gave similar support. They were honestly afraid of what would ensue

if all the country turned against the King. This is somewhat of a digression from my subject, but it may serve to show one or two of the points of difference between the present and the past. We have every reason to be thankful that now, happily, the personality of the Sovereign has no place whatever in our political battles.

I propose to trace the electoral life of a community during and some time after that transitional period, when the old election procedure was being superseded by the new, and thereby to illustrate some of the peculiar methods in use when party warfare was waged under somewhat different conditions than at present.

I had as a child no alternative but to take an interest in elections, for my father was an ardent politician, and never kept his opinions to himself whether it were in domestic or public circles. The consequence was that whenever two or three of the family were gathered together, whether at meal-times or on other occasions, politics monopolized a considerable portion of the conversation. Hence, as soon as I was old enough to go to school I was conversant with the names of Peel, Brougham, Lord John, Cobden, Bright, Disraeli, Gladstone, Palmerston, and other of the political shining lights of those days, and I early learnt to revere certain of them and to abominate others. Added to this, the house we occupied was most favourably situated for the fostering of any inclination I might have had to take an interest in elections. It overlooked the central space, round which the successful candidates for Parliamentary honours were chaired—it was next door but one to the principal polling station, viz. the Town Hall, and it was immediately opposite the Police Station, to which those of the free and independent electors who had drunk “not wisely but too well” to the health of their adopted candidates were conveyed when they were in a suitable condition. As a child, therefore, I had full opportunity of studying, at any rate, the exterior of election proceedings, and of seeing a good deal of the joyous and picturesque side of them. Bands and processions were constantly passing the windows, and cheering crowds were continually exciting my enthusiasm. It is difficult, in these

more prosaic days, when we have disencumbered ourselves of so much that was effective from a spectacular point of view, but which at the same time one must admit was entirely indefensible from a common-sense point of view, to realize, unless one's memory can carry one back to those days, how much there was then to see and to do in connection with elections.

My paternal grandfather was the honorary agent of an M.P., and one of his duties was, shortly after the election, to sit in an upper chamber of the hotel, which was the candidate's headquarters, with a clerk, the poll book, and a little pile of money before him. During that sitting many voters found their way to that upper chamber. When they entered it they were saluted by my grandfather, who said, "Plumper or split," and the voter answered one or the other. The clerk then turned up the voter's name in the poll book, and if he had concentrated all his voting power upon the particular candidate my grandfather represented, instead of voting for two candidates—the representation being a dual one—he was presented with a guinea. If, on the other hand, he voted for two candidates this was "a split," and he only had half a guinea. In either case he also received a verbal expression of thanks tendered by my grandfather on behalf of the member. Now it must not be thought that this was for a moment regarded as bribery. In the first place, no promise was made beforehand as to this distribution of favours, and, the election being over, it could not be said that it formed an inducement to vote. At the same time many of the candidate's supporters would, I think, have been very much surprised if they had not received this acknowledgment of their supposed services. It was only regarded as a little compliment for the trouble they had taken in going to the polling-booth, and any one who objected to such a recognition would have been execrated by both sides and would have done his cause more harm than good. The real bribery was, of course, carried out in a much less ostentatious manner, and much more respectable sums than guineas and half-guineas changed hands when it came to a matter of purchasing votes previous to the declaration of the poll.

I arrived upon the scene in time to witness some of the old pomp and pageantry which lent so attractive a glamour to electoral contests, and I enjoyed to the full the processions and skirmishes, the bands and the banners, with the crowning function, the chairing, to finish with.

I have a very clear recollection of seeing successful candidates "chaired," as it was termed, though something more convenient than merely a chair, which on men's shoulders was a very uneasy method of conveyance, was often adopted. I remember on one occasion, after a dual election, the victors rode each on a sort of ornamental trolley profusely adorned with laurels and ribbons, on which the chair, a handsome and decorative one, was placed, each of the vehicles being drawn by four horses with postilions. I remember it was a very hot sunshiny day, and as, out of respect to the electors, a Member could not wear his hat, he was very liable to signalize his triumph by getting a sunstroke. To avert this, one of them, Langston, held a huge gingham umbrella over his head, which somewhat distracted from the picturesqueness of his appearance. The other, Sir William Page Wood, exercised more forethought, for he provided himself beforehand with a very handsome canopy over his chair, which protected him from the sun, and at the same time was much more effective, from an æsthetic point of view, than an umbrella. His colours and banners were orange and green, and Langston's blue. The whole scene was a most attractive and stirring one. Each Member was preceded by a band playing "See the conquering hero comes" and by a number of large banners, on which were emblazoned political watchwords, and was followed by a great procession of supporters decorated with the party colours. Each Member had a bag of silver handy, and after he had been chaired three times round Carfax, he was escorted in triumph to his hotel, and then came the difficulty for him to get safely into shelter and to save from destruction his chair, which he usually desired to keep as a family relic. It was customary for the crowd to seize upon the chair, almost before the poor man could get out of it, in order to break it up into mementoes of the election. His only hope of

getting himself and the chair safely housed was to divert the attention of the crowd, and this was done by a lavish distribution of the contents of the bag of silver. Whilst the crowd were engaged in the scramble for this the Member whisked out of his chair, and the latter was taken possession of by those who desired to rescue it, and he and the chair were hustled into the hotel, the large doors of which were immediately closed and barred. Then he was called by the populace to the bow window or balcony, where he expressed his obligations to the free and independent electors, who forthwith went off to liquidate some of the profits arising from the day's proceedings.

The last chairing that took place at Oxford, and which I witnessed, was that of the Right Hon. Edward, afterwards Viscount, Cardwell, who succeeded Sir William Page Wood when the latter became Lord Chancellor and was raised to the Peerage.

Such was a typical day in the election proceedings of those times, and it is not surprising that, with such facilities for enjoying it, I became, even in my early childhood, a very ardent admirer of elections.

A very attractive feature of the county elections was the entry of the candidates into the county town for the nomination. Each candidate was not only preceded by the usual band and banners, but also by his tenantry on horseback decked out in the candidate's colours. I have seen four processions of this description in one day. In those times when there were half a dozen applicants for a vacant farm, and when the landlord was able to dictate the conditions under which the land should be cultivated, he was a bold man who voted according to his own convictions if they clashed with those of his landlord, and so most candidates could make a brave show of retainers. I also witnessed, after the poll had been officially declared, the picturesque custom, long dispensed with, of the girding on by the successful candidates of their swords as "Knights of the Shire." This ceremony was only gone through by the representatives of county constituencies.

What particularly strikes one, in looking back upon election proceedings in those days, was the inordinate

amount of time people, who might have been better employed, devoted to them, not merely in such work as canvassing but in cheering or marching about behind a band; for both sides, some time before the date of polling, had bands perambulating the city to stimulate the interest and excitement. One of the very first tunes I ever learnt—and it could not fail to be impressed upon my memory owing to the frequency with which I heard it—was the Tory Anthem, “Hurrah for the bonnets of blue.” In this the Tories had the advantage, if the discord thus created by a very indifferent band could be so regarded, inasmuch as the other side lacked any distinctive tune to lead them to victory.

By the time I had emerged from childhood into boyhood all this pomp and circumstance represented by banners, bands, and chairing, which appealed so strongly to a young imagination, had been swept out of sight by Act of Parliament and a much more commonplace order of things substituted for it. Many who had an affection for the old order of things lamented the iconoclasm which altered them, and looked upon it as the precursor of worse to come. My political opinions were at this stage hardly sufficiently fixed to enable me to view these changes from this standpoint, but I can answer for it that I was heartily sorry at being deprived of so much which, from a spectacular point of view, lent a colour and a joy to life. It is not perhaps altogether astonishing that, in the dispassionateness engendered by age, my only wonder now is that such a state of things lasted as long as it did, and my conviction is that it did not disappear a day too soon. Nevertheless, although a good deal of the vivid colouring had gone by the board, human nature being what it was, plenty of excitement still remained.

The first election in which I was privileged to play a small part occurred not long after the curtailment of election expenses already referred to, viz. in March, 1857, and it is worth while going into particulars concerning it, in order to fully appreciate all the circumstances under which Thackeray, the novelist, fought at the subsequent notable election, which was the outcome of the previous

one. Beyond this, the number and personality of the candidates, together with the light the contest shed upon electioneering methods, would go far to justify its rescue from oblivion.

There were four candidates for two seats : Langston, a county landowner and a Whig, who deferred to latter-day prejudices by calling himself a Liberal ; Cardwell, a Peelite, who described himself as a Liberal-Conservative ; Neate, Professor of Political Economy at Oxford, a Liberal, pure and simple ; and Gaselee, Recorder of Portsmouth, and one of the last of the Sergeants, a Radical ; the two first-named being the sitting members.

Decorated with a large blue rosette, the Conservative colour, I was permitted on the polling-day, in a purely honorary capacity, to deliver notes and messages between my father's house and Cardwell's Central Committee Room at the old Star Hotel. This, my first admission " behind the scenes " of an electoral drama, was a proud moment for me. I came right into the very presence of the chiefs of the party, breathed the same atmosphere, heard their deliberations upon the plan of campaign, and stood on the very same carpet as the candidate himself.

Langston's return was practically assured beforehand, because he had always been very liberal with his money, and therefore derived support from many on both sides, who were not anxious to have such a source of supply interfered with. Gaselee's following was not sufficiently large to render him a formidable opponent, and so it was generally known that the real fight, which was likely to be a close one, would be between Cardwell and Neate for the second place. Notwithstanding this, a number of electors were, strange to say, apparently so apathetic that they could not be prevailed upon, even when the polling-day was well advanced, to record their votes, and the worst of it, from a party point of view, was that while both sides were aware that their fate depended upon these voters neither side had sufficient confidence in their political proclivities to count upon their support. The poll closed then at four o'clock, and shortly after three p.m. a message was sent into Cardwell's headquarters that certain voters

would be glad of an interview with the Committee. This having been granted, it appeared that between forty and fifty free and independent electors thought that the moment had arrived when a business matter should be placed upon a business footing, and forthwith named a price at which they were willing to sacrifice themselves by going to the poll in favour of the Conservative candidate. They were not prepared to treat for individual votes but must be secured *en bloc*, "all or none" being their motto.

There was a division of opinion in the Committee upon the subject, some thinking that it might be well to come to terms, as it was the only chance of retaining the seat, while others dissented from this. In the midst of the discussion Cardwell entered the room, and his Committee, in a spirit of refreshing frankness, laid the matter before him for his opinion. Cardwell, though ordinarily a somewhat cold, calm, and unimpassioned man, denounced in no measured terms any proposition for the purchase of votes. It was then resolved that one of the Committee should go out, apparently to treat with the party, and take down all their names, finishing up by declining to have anything to do with them. My father was deputed to undertake this duty, which he did, and, on receiving their answer, the little band of electoral pilgrims straightway went across the road to Neate's headquarters, the Roebuck Hotel, where their desire for an interview was immediately acceded to. The Committee, with a better knowledge of human nature than the other side evinced, did not think it worth while to trouble Neate about so trifling a matter. If they had done so, no doubt he would have taken a similar view of it as Cardwell did; as it was they preferred to act "on their own" and negotiate the business themselves.

Between three and four o'clock that same afternoon I was standing at a window overlooking the street in which the polling-place was situated, when I heard a deal of shouting, and saw a number of men arm-in-arm being escorted to the poll by a cheering crowd. My father, just then entering the room, exclaimed:

"The election is as good as over; Neate is in, and there go the lot who have done it."

I shall never forget the awful depression that fell upon me at these words, for I had made up my mind that the candidate of my choice was bound to win. When the result was declared, my father's prophecy was realized, for Langston headed the poll with 1671 votes, Neate came next with 1057, Cardwell following with 1016, whilst Gaselee was at the bottom with 245, so that Neate beat Cardwell by 41 votes. The general understanding that Langston was safe was thus verified, and it was clear from the very large majority he had that he enjoyed the support of both Liberals and Conservatives.

The Cardwellites, with the knowledge in their possession of how the election was won, could hardly sit down quietly without a protest, but Cardwell was so little pleased with the constituency that he was not very keen for a continuance of the honour of representing it, and declined to have anything further to do with it or with any petition. His supporters, however, were not prepared to accept their defeat, and a petition was duly presented against Neate's return. In those days election petitions were not dealt with by judges, as they are now, but by a Committee of the House of Commons, consisting of five persons, three representing the Government and two the Opposition. The odd man was generally the determining factor in the case, so that if there were any doubt the Government candidate had the benefit of it; in fact, it generally required very strong evidence to unseat him. In this particular case, however, the evidence was so irresistible that the result was a foregone conclusion if ever any Member was liable to unseating at all. Neate's Committee sought to escape the penalty by antedating by a fortnight the services of all those free and independent electors whom I saw marching up to the poll; they having been returned as in the employ of the Committee as clerks, messengers, etc., for the period named. As, however, the Committee failed to prove that they had ever set eyes on any of them previous to about half an hour before the poll closed, it did not save the seat. The House of Commons Committee had no option, therefore, but to find, in the terms of their report, that "152 persons were paid under the pretence that this was

remuneration for services during the election and that in many of the cases no adequate services were in reality performed; also that all those persons voted for Neate," which more than accounted for his majority of 41 over Cardwell.

## CHAPTER XI

Thackeray's Bid for Parliament—His Opponent—The Polling—Why Thackeray failed—A Happy Defeat—Political Instability.

THE next election with which I had any association will be long remembered and quoted on account of the notable personality of one of the candidates—Thackeray, the novelist.

The full story of Thackeray's one and only effort to enter Parliament has never yet been told, and, for reasons which will presently appear, is hardly likely to be told from actual observation unless I take upon myself the rôle of narrator. Lady Ritchie, in her summary of the main incidents of her father's life, contributed to "the Biographical Edition" of his works, gives some interesting extracts from his letters and speeches in relation to the subject, but does not go far beyond this ; other biographers have mainly confined themselves to reproducing the novelist's hustings-addresses. This might very well be deemed more than sufficient as regards most Parliamentary elections, but Thackeray's candidature takes the one in question well out of the ordinary ruck. Time seems only to accentuate the interest attaching to so attractive a personality, and in this may be found a justification for endeavouring to throw some additional light upon a notable episode.

I owe my *locus standi* in the matter, in the first instance, to environment, as I was a resident in the constituency Thackeray aspired to represent. In the next place—and this is a still more potent factor in the case—I was the son of a father to whom politics were as the breath of life, and who, figuratively speaking, regarded an election very much in the same spirit as the Irishman of tradition did Donnybrook Fair ; whenever there were electoral " wigs on the

green " my progenitor might be safely counted upon to be at hand. As I was a recipient of his unrestrained political confidences, for he was too much in earnest to keep his sentiments to himself, I was exceptionally well situated for becoming acquainted with most that transpired, whether above or below the surface, in the political life of the place of my nativity, viz. the University-City of Oxford. So it was that when the creator of Barry Lyndon threw his hat into the ring I knew how and why he did so, and became *en rapport* with all that befell him afterwards. When, metaphorically speaking, shillelaghs were flourished, I knew who had the handling of them and on whose heads they descended.

Thackeray is so entirely associated with the making of books that a reference to the episode in his career which revealed his political aspirations is not infrequently received with questioning surprise.

It is not given to every one to realize the limitation of his area of distinction which the ancient saying, "every man to his mousetrap," implies, and the ambition of men who have compassed greatness, or something akin to it, to gather fresh laurels in an entirely different sphere of work from that in which they have made a name, and one in all probability outside the range of their powers, is one of those human weaknesses of which genius now and again furnishes an example. Hence Thackeray, not content with his triumphs in the world of literature, must needs aspire to lend a hand in the making of his country's laws. Except in rare instances the rôles of novelist and statesman have not been found in successful combination, and there is no reason for believing that Thackeray, if he had succeeded in his desire to become a Parliamentary legislator, would have furnished in himself an exception to the general rule.

The election having been declared null and void, the seat became vacant, and the Liberals had to look out for another candidate. For some little time previously Thackeray had had Parliamentary aspirations which had found some encouragement. In a letter to his mother, written from Bath in February, 1857, Thackeray said: "To-day I get invitations from Ireland, declined with

thanks, from Devonshire, from Bath again, and Bristol : from Yorkshire for the summer. Where is it going to stop ? What I said about a great career is not swagger, but a fair look at chances in the face. Just when the novel-writing faculty is pretty well used up, here is independence, a place in Parliament, and who knows what afterwards ? Upon my word I don't seem much to care, and Fate carries me along in a stream somehow. Shall I float with it or jump ashore ? " The Oxford Liberals in search of a candidate were put upon his track, and, as he was just then spoiling for a fight, matters were soon arranged. When the electoral vacancy occurred, Lord Monck, who had been Governor-General of Canada, offered himself, but the Conservative Party preferred to stand by their old representative, Cardwell, so Monck retired. Before doing so he happened to meet Thackeray, and in a friendly way they discussed the election in which they were both engaged. At that time a sort of catch phrase of the day was, "May the best man win," and Thackeray, in allusion to the election, took leave of Lord Monck with, "May the best man win." Lord Monck, with a bow and a smile, at once promptly responded with, "I sincerely hope not." A compliment which could hardly be exceeded in gracefulness.

At this time Thackeray wrote the following rhyming letter from Oxford to his daughters :

" My dearest little women, as far as I can see,  
The independent voters is all along with me ;  
But, nevertheless, I own it, with not a little funk,  
The more respectable classes they go with Wiscount Monck ;  
But a fight without a tussle it is not worth a pin,  
And so St. George for England, and may the best man win."

My father, although he had personal associations with Thackeray, was far too pronounced a politician to allow this for a moment to deter him from devoting all his energies to promoting the return of the novelist's opponent as the representative of the Conservative cause. As to myself, having tasted blood at the previous election, I was preternaturally keen in following every phase of the one arising out of it.

With the intent to inspire confidence in the cause and to bring home to waverers that the popular enthusiasm

was with it, it was arranged that Thackeray, on his arrival on the scene of action, should be met at the G.W.R. Station by a large contingent of supporters—not one in twenty of whom, however, though the gratified candidate knew it not, had a vote—who, as the train drew up, rent the air with joyous shouts. Amid a scene of unbounded enthusiasm, the horses were taken out of the chariot awaiting his arrival, and the populace, with noble self-abasement, harnessed themselves, with ropes thoughtfully provided beforehand, to the vehicle. Thus, amid a cheering throng, was the champion of democracy dragged by his disciples through that long and dreary stretch of thoroughfare known as the New Road, adown Queen Street, across Carfax, and into the “High” to the *Mitre*, the new headquarters of the party. Thackeray, as his after-remarks showed, believed, in the innocency of his heart, that this demonstration represented a spontaneous outburst of genuine enthusiasm for himself and his cause. But he was unversed in electoral methods, and his views with respect to such matters were modified when the settling-up came after the election.

Thackeray called himself a Radical, but his printed address—a copy of which I have—in which he solicited the suffrages of the free and independent electors, dealt mainly in generalities, and was written in a subdued key as if the writer were too tender-hearted to wound the susceptibilities of his opponents if he could help it. How gently he did his spiriting may be judged from the following sentence: “With no feeling but that of goodwill towards those leading aristocratic families who are administering the chief offices of State, I believe that it could be benefited by the skill and talents of persons less aristocratic, and that the country thinks so likewise.”

The only measure with regard to which, in his address, he committed himself to a definite expression of opinion was that which provided vote by ballot, for which he said he “would vote most hopefully.” Now this was not a particularly good card to play at Oxford, inasmuch, as for reasons best known to themselves, there was no great anxiety on either side to substitute for open voting anything calculated to depreciate the intrinsic value of the

individual franchise. He was in favour of an "amended suffrage," but he was careful to point out that it should be amended "in nature as well as in numbers," and he hoped "to see many educated classes represented who have now no voice in elections."

The address, as a whole, was not calculated unduly to alarm moderate Liberals, whilst, at the same time, it paid deference to some of the measures which the extremer section of the party supported. It was, in fact, good enough to win with had it stood alone. But Thackeray, at the very start, unfortunately, committed himself to a line of policy which, although it has no mention in his address, was fatal to his chance ; of this more anon.

Thackeray had no command of that platform-oratory which sways the multitude. He could not descend to political clap-trap, and his verbiage lacked ornamentation, whilst his delivery was halting and hesitating. At the same time, he occasionally showed a directness of speech going straight to the point, and an originality of illustration which, in the mouth of a more accomplished elocutionist, would have been very effective. He recognized in one of his election speeches his own shortcomings in this respect when he said : "I own I cannot speak very well, but I shall learn. I cannot spin out glib sentences by the yard as some people can ; but if I have got anything in my mind, if I feel strongly on any question, I have, I believe, got brains enough to express it." It is impossible not to sympathize with the simple-minded honesty of this confession on the part of one who reigned supreme where "brains" counted most.

His opponent was a strong candidate in respect of Parliamentary knowledge and experience, and he had just that cautious non-committal manner and deportment which induced a belief that he was, above all, a "safe man." He was an elegant, rather than a rousing, speaker, and he rarely allowed anything to disturb the unruffled calm of his polished delivery. He possessed, too, a very valuable faculty in one destined to become a Cabinet Minister, for his command of words enabled him to talk about a Bill for an hour in a way that satisfied his hearers without

enabling any one at the end of his discourse to be quite sure whether the speaker intended to vote for or against it. On the present occasion, however, his supporters had to trust to their remembrance of his qualities, as he was neither seen nor heard during the election.

To outward appearance, the odds were all in Thackeray's favour. First and foremost, Liberalism was evidently in the ascendant in the constituency, as proved by the previous election ; the issue was a clearly-defined one, no cross voting being possible, and the party was apparently united. Then, again, he had all the support the unseated candidate, Professor Neate, could give him, and experience has generally shown that one of the most unpopular things a party can do in a constituency is to unseat a representative for spending his money too freely. And, lastly, his party had the inestimable advantage of a tangible, corporeal presence to rally round, whereas the other side had nothing better than a name to conjure with.

To any one of the novelist's highly-strung sensitiveness and intellectual fibre, canvassing must have been a sore trial, and it is not surprising that, after the election, he said he would never go canvassing again ; it was "too humiliating." But he went through it bravely, genially fraternizing with the shopocracy in the "High" and the "Corn," and grasping the horny hand of toil in St. Thomas's and Jericho. He was a little hurt at the general ignorance of the electors respecting his own achievements, and has put this feeling on record in his delightful request to Dickens to come to Oxford and tell the people who he (Thackeray) was. Said the latter, "I doubt whether more than *two* of the electors have ever heard of *me*, and I think there may be as many as *six or eight* who have heard of *you*." However, Thackeray was well satisfied with his canvass, declaring on the eve of the poll that it had exceeded his most sanguine expectations.

The public nomination of candidates took place from a balcony of the old Town Hall—the populace filling the large yard which it overlooked ; the new Municipal Buildings now occupy the site. Like many similar functions in those days, uproar was its distinguishing characteristic,

the usual high-flown compliments being liberally punctuated by unflattering interjections. Thackeray got a hearing, and scored a hit by remarking, after Cardwell's proposer and seconder had spoken, that the god-parents were present, but "where is the baby?" The novelist's cause was in the ascendant that morning, for it drew first blood by getting the show of hands.

Excitement ran high on the polling day, and, to keep the spirits of the party up to concert pitch, the Liberals engaged the services of a band, which perambulated the streets escorted by a goodly contingent wearing Thackeray's cards in their hats. In this instance, music failed to exercise that soothing charm ascribed to it. As the day wore on and the Thackerayites began to realize that their cause was in something more than jeopardy, they felt that it was time to take action, so they smashed the windows and broke up the furniture of the Conservative Central Committee Room, and, in other ways, made it so clear that physical force had now its part to play that the police had to be reinforced by special constables. The Mayor, in his anxiety not to prolong the agony, fixed the declaration of the poll for the same evening, instead of waiting as usual to the next day.

The official announcement showed that Cardwell had won by 67 votes, polling 1085 votes against Thackeray's 1018. A tumultuous outburst of indignation followed the declaration from the seething mob gathered in the Town Hall Yard, and Cardwell's supporters, who desired to speak on his behalf, could only gesticulate in dumb show. Thackeray, however, as the popular favourite, was allowed a good innings, and took advantage of it by delivering a valedictory address, which might serve as a model to follow for every defeated candidate since. It was not only admirable in tone and temper but was the very essence of grace and chivalry. As I have said, Thackeray, from an electioneering point of view, was no orator, but here indeed was a case in which "out of the mouth the heart speaketh." He had nothing to do but to give expression to his generous instincts, unfettered by any considerations as to whether it might be politic to say this or

that. Among my father's papers I found his own note of what Thackeray said, and the following extracts from the speech will justify my description of it. He said :

“Let me tell you a little story and a true one. Some years ago, when boxing was the fashion, two of the greatest champions fought a great fight on Mousley Hurst ; their names were Gully and Gregson, and they fought the most tremendous battle that had been known for many a long year, and, as must happen to one, Gregson had the worst of it. While lying on his bed blind, for both his eyes were closed, he asked for some drink. A friend gave him some, and he asked whose hand it was—it was Jack Gully's, who was the first to shake him by the hand to show that he had no animosity against him. So should be the conduct of all loyal and true-hearted Englishmen, who should fight a good fight to the utmost, and when it is over shake hands and hold no animosity. With these feelings I go away from Oxford. I will shake Mr. Cardwell by the hand, and congratulate him on being the chosen representative of this great city. It is a victory for him to be proud of, and a victory for us to be proud of that we have fought. I part with my opponents as I part with my friends. (Cries of ‘Bribery and corruption.’) Why call out ‘Bribery and corruption’? If you know it, prove it. I am innocent of bribery or of doing any wrongful act myself, and I choose to fancy that my opponents have acted with the same fairness and with the same honesty. It matters not whether I am in the House of Commons or not ; but I trust that on some future day when a champion comes here better known than myself your cause will be brought to a successful issue. I know when I came into this town there was one dangerous point which would most assuredly go against me with the great body of electors ; but I was not afraid to avow my principles. In March last some friends of mine in Edinburgh asked me to stand for the representation of that city. I then said that I desired to see the people amused after service on Sunday, but I knew I was speaking to people hostile to such opinions, and, therefore, I preferred to maintain rather than renounce them. I felt it to be my duty, as an honest man, to state

them here, and that, I believe, has made the difference between the majority and the minority. I am contented to return from Oxford with the conviction that I have suffered because I deemed to help the poor man to some harmless recreation on his only day of freedom. I shall now retire to my desk and pen, and give up all thoughts of a business which I do not know so well as Mr. Cardwell. I leave you in peace and goodwill to all men."

We must all agree that this was a worthy leave-taking ; worthy of the man and worthy of the spirit in which all political battles should be fought.

How did it happen that Thackeray failed when he had so much in his favour and with the Liberals in a majority in the constituency ? The result was entirely due to one circumstance, which was more than sufficient to account for the loss of twice 67 votes ; and thereby hangs a tale. On the evening of Thackeray's arrival in Oxford, and before addressing a public meeting, he expounded his views to a comparatively small, private gathering of his Committee in the coffee-room of the Mitre Hotel. Those who are acquainted with that ancient hostelry are aware that the coffee-room was—and perhaps is still—on the ground floor with a large bow-window abutting upon the High Street. The weather was warm, and the room, which is low-ceilinged, being crowded, the atmosphere was decidedly oppressive. Therefore it was thought advisable to open the window. The blinds being drawn, no one inside observed that on the pavement in close proximity to the window was an attentive listener in the person of a member of Cardwell's Committee. I knew him well in those days, and was on friendly terms with him until his death many years ago. He was a genial, kindly soul, but unrelenting in political warfare. Thackeray, without unduly emphasizing every feature of his programme, that evening went out of his way to unburden himself with special frankness upon one point, with respect to which he gave no uncertain sound. Before his tactical indiscretion could be checked, he unhesitatingly and unreservedly declared himself in favour of opening museums, picture galleries, and even the Crystal Palace, on Sunday. Then the

Cardwellite knew that the speaker had delivered himself into his hands, and the next day the city was placarded with appeals to the electors to vote against a desecration of the Sabbath. Outside Scotland there was no place in the United Kingdom where, at that time, such a declaration would be so fatal to a candidate as at Oxford, for, in addition to alienating the support of many Churchmen, it detached the Nonconformists—the large majority of whom were Liberals—almost *en masse*.

Thackeray was implored to recall what he had said and modify his views upon the question, which he was too honest to do, whilst his Committee endeavoured to whittle down his sentiments, but the mischief was done. The most Thackeray would do was to leave all mention of the subject he apparently had so much at heart out of his addresses and future speeches. When pressed by his adversaries, he had too much sincerity to go back upon his first declaration, or to minimize it, and so many electors, who had hitherto voted Liberal, took fright, and either abstained from going to the poll or threw in their lot against him. "Oft great events from little causes spring," and if the party had not shifted its headquarters from the *Roebuck* to the *Mitre*, or if that coffee-room window had not happened to have been opened, the novelist, in all human probability, would have realized his ambition and entered the House of Commons. Had the declaration been confined to the few who were present in the room, a stopper would speedily have been put to any publicity of an item of policy which need never have come into the reckoning at all. Thackeray knew to what circumstance he owed the disclosure, for there was the following marked allusions in his speech at the nomination: "I have no spies; however much people may be lurking at the doors of *our* Committee Room." "The whirligig of time brings about its revenges," and I have lived to see a measure, for advocating which a Liberal was rejected in favour of a Conservative, passed by a House of Commons in which the Conservatives had an overwhelming majority.

His defeat was a great surprise to Thackeray, who implicitly relied upon the information his canvassers gave

him; and, later on, the price he was called upon to pay for it equally astonished him. Fortunately, the campaign was a very short one or the expenses would have mounted up much higher. As it was, he got off at the cost of £831 17s. 9d., being £46 5s. 10d. above that accredited to the winning side, who escaped with £785 11s. 11d. This was a cheap get-out for both sides, supposing it represented *all* the expenditure, at an Oxford Election.

This one attempt to enter Parliament sufficed for Thackeray, and his admirers could hardly wish it otherwise. What a delightful revelation it would have been if he could have given his election experiences to the world! There is a locality, towards the north of Oxford, known as Jericho. At the time of which I am speaking it was the abode of a considerable number of electors uncertain in their opinions but certain as to the main condition upon which they gave expression to them; some of them certainly endorsed the dictum usually, but wrongly, attributed to Walpole that "every man has his price." Thackeray, who was taken into their midst for canvassing purposes, found, when the bills came in, that he had had to pay somewhat heavily for the privilege of their society. After the election a club-friend, making sympathetic inquiries of him concerning the election, received a reply which spoke volumes, for, said Thackeray, in sorrow rather than in anger, "I went down into Jericho and fell among thieves." It is but fair to say that, helped by an enlarged franchise and a Parliamentary Commission, which sat at Oxford in 1881, and took considerable pains in investigating electoral methods there, a vote is no longer regarded, either in Jericho or the city at large, as a marketable commodity.

I venture to think that no one need regret that Thackeray failed to obtain entrance to the House. To attempt to divert the genius of so great a master in his own line into another channel was a mistake that was happily averted. He could hardly have been a success in the heated atmosphere of politics, whereas he enriched the world with what only he could give as he sat in after years in the quiet of his own study.

The inestimable gifts which Thackeray bestowed upon literature after he had escaped, once and for all, from the tumult and strife of a world in which he could never have shone as he did in his own natural sphere, render his defeat at Oxford a subject of real congratulation. In a leading article immediately after the election the *Times* well said of him: "If he has any feeling of disappointment, he may console himself with the reflection that the collective House of Commons could not write *Barry Lyndon* or *Vanity Fair*."

A mutual friend sent the foregoing account of Thackeray's bid for Parliament before it was put into print to his talented daughter, Lady Ritchie, the novelist, who has written a memoir of her father, and is the author of other works, and she kindly wrote as follows: "I am delighted to have read it. I remember my sister and I being nearly in tears, when my father came home from Oxford after the election in such good spirits and happy excitement that all our troubles vanished then and there. It is most interesting the way in which Mr. Plowman describes it all and remembers what happened. Thank you once more for letting me see the account."

I was very glad to have this testimony that there was nothing in what I had said calculated to wound those whose feelings were entitled to consideration.

There is a sequel to this election which is worth recording if only as an instance of the instability of human affairs and of political champions especially. Within a very short time of his return by the Conservatives Cardwell blossomed into a full-blown Liberal, and transferred his allegiance to that side of the House. The effect upon the Conservatives who had toiled and fought for him can be very well imagined, and their indignation at what they regarded as their betrayal knew no bounds. His former opponents, thankfully concluding that he had seen the error of his ways, forthwith took him to their bosom and returned him time after time. My father, as long as he lived, was in the van of his opponents, and, in later years, with a vote to back it up, I worked for all I was worth at every opportunity to bring about the defeat of one whom, in my

early unfranchised youth, I regarded as the incarnation of political wisdom. Thus was Thackeray avenged, though, cynic as many supposed him, one may be sure that he was far too good-natured to have any delight in such a retribution.

## CHAPTER XII

Open Voting *versus* the Ballot—Sir William Harcourt's Defeat—Dramatic Sequel—A Petition and a Commission—How Votes were paid for.

THE 1868 election was the last General Election at which there was open voting, for the Ballot Act came into operation in 1872. The main object of the system of open voting was apparently to let all the world know what were your political proclivities. In those days we did not usually vote in nice comfortable halls or schoolrooms as we do now, well screened from the vulgar gaze, but in open polling booths, as they were called. These were only boarded up in front to about the height of a man's waist, so that the mob outside who crowded round the booth could have the full benefit of your reply to the presiding officer's interrogatory, "Who do you vote for?" When you had answered the question, in a voice loud enough to be heard all round, and it had been repeated by half a dozen people, the agent of the candidate of your choice solemnly raised his hat to you and said, with all due deference to one who has condescended to vote, "I beg to thank you on behalf of Mr. So-and-so," naming the candidate, while the agent of the other side probably scowled at you.

But this was by no means all you had to go through, for you had then, when you made your way out, to face the mob. This was a pleasant-enough ordeal if you had voted for the popular cause, for then you were greeted with warm-hearted enthusiasm. My experience, alas! was very different. As soon as I had unburdened myself of my vote, I was saluted for my pains with a volley of groans and hisses from the immediate outsiders, and the word was soon passed round, "Here's another o' them bloomin' Tories," and the way in which I was shoved and hustled,

and rammed and jammed, remains in my memory to this day. It was enough to deter physically weak or timid folk from going to the poll at all.

One experience of open voting was quite sufficient to convert me from an opponent into a supporter of the ballot. If you could only succeed in packing your public bodies with sufficient thick-and-thin partisans to carry all before them, open voting put a powerful lever for the securing of votes by the bestowal of patronage, or the practising of intimidation, in the hands of whichever party happened to be uppermost.

After I had attained to the vote, I took an active part in several elections, and finished up my political career in my native city by taking a hand in an election, the result of which so surprised the whole country.

In April, 1880, Sir William Harcourt was returned for Oxford City at the head of the poll. In the following month he became Home Secretary, and so had to offer himself for re-election. I have always felt that it was a great hardship for a man who had earned promotion to have to undergo the trouble and expense of a fresh election, whether uncontested or not, and in all ordinary cases, I think, he should be allowed a walk-over. It is possible that once in a way there might be some exceptional circumstances justifying an opposition, but these hardly existed in the particular instance, when so short a time had elapsed since the previous election. However, these views did not prevail and I bowed to the feeling of the large majority of my party, who determined to make a fight of it. It is rather singular that Harcourt first made his mark in the House of Commons by his spirited opposition to the repeal of the Act which renders it necessary for Members, upon accepting certain offices of State, to appeal to their constituents, and that he was destined to become the best-known victim of its operation.

Both parties girded up their loins for a fight to the death, and, although the time occupied by this electoral campaign was necessarily very short, it cost far more money to each side than any one of the preceding ones within recollection. It resulted, to the surprise of the

whole country, in the rejection by 54 votes of a shining light in the political world in favour of a local man, whom he had defeated only a few weeks previously.

At that time, among other occupations, I was on the staff of a London daily paper, as its University correspondent. The election took place on a Saturday, and so astounded was my editor at the news which greeted him on his arrival at his office on Sunday, that, although city elections were not subjects upon which I had to write, he straightway telegraphed to me to send him at once all the particulars I could to account for so extraordinary a result, which I accordingly did, in the shape of a column of matter. In acknowledging it, he sent me a handsome apology for disturbing the calm of my Sabbath, and excused himself by dwelling upon the interest and wonderment which had been created, as Harcourt's election had been regarded as a foregone conclusion. In fact, it had been treated as such, by anticipation, in the leading articles upon the subject in the various newspapers.

Now, what was the cause of this singular *volte face* of a constituency within the space of three weeks? Bribery, undoubtedly, had a good deal to do with it, but not all, because both sides were afterwards reported for corrupt practices. The real reason is to be found in the fact that the first of the two elections was lost mainly owing to the intense desire of many Conservatives to keep out Harcourt at any price, and they fancied they could accomplish this by splitting their votes between their own man and the candidate who ran with Harcourt. They thought their own man was safe, and that the fight would be between Harcourt and his partner—Chitty, afterwards Justice Chitty—and of the two they infinitely preferred the latter. They acted accordingly, and were correspondingly disillusioned when the poll was declared.

The feeling against Harcourt may be accounted for by the fact that in those days he was always more aggressive than conciliatory. He smote his enemies hard, and neither gave nor asked for quarter. His own supporters regarded him with feelings rather of admiration than affection, for he could not bring himself to practise the arts and wiles so





essential to successful electioneering. Hence, those who accompanied him on canvassing expeditions felt happier and breathed more freely when they could plead his cause in his absence. He lacked the "Hail, fellow, well met" air which is so captivating to many "free and independent" electors, and he was not prepared to grasp effusively every grimy hand that offered itself, or to win the regard of the voters' wives by kissing their babies. His opponent was, from the first, put upon the familiar and affectionate footing implied by an abbreviation of his Christian name, but no one ever dreamt of alluding to the last of the Plantagenets as "Billy," and he would not have appreciated it if they had.

I remember on the occasion once of a visit from a Parliamentary candidate I was having in a load of coal, and as we were standing talking in the hall, the coal-heaver passed us with a sack of coal upon his back. On returning, after depositing his load, the prospective M.P. suddenly darted after him, grasped his coaly hand, and, apologizing for not recognizing him when he first passed, inquired most tenderly after himself and all his belongings. Needless to say, he was a voter.

I was not generally regarded as a good canvasser, because if a man told me he had promised to vote for the other side I was very apt to tell him that then he had better keep his promise, and this, I believe, is not in accordance with the tactics of good electioneering. I think the most complete rebuff I ever had during canvassing was at the hands of a man who lived upon his means in my district. I tackled him single-handed, which I think now was a mistake. I was shown into his sitting-room, where I found him in an armchair by the fire. I explained my business with all the suavity I could command, and expressed a hope that we might have the advantage of his vote and interest for the candidate on whose behalf I called. He turned upon me, and in tones of withering scorn said :

"Sir, I do not trouble myself about such trumpery affairs as elections; I am looking after my immortal soul, and you would be much better employed in looking after yours, instead of cadging for votes."

And with that he turned his back upon me, and not having a convincing answer to this reprimand ready I beat a hasty retreat. I have always regretted that I had no good and appropriate reply to this. But I was so taken by surprise, the assault was so unexpected, and was of so unusual a character that I had no suitable ammunition ready. I ascertained afterwards that the gentleman in question was a Plymouth Brother, and the course he pursued was quite anticipated by those gentlemen who had suggested my calling upon him.

When the curtain fell upon the declaration of the poll at this election, most persons thought that the drama had come to an end, and the *dénouement* was sufficiently striking and conclusive to justify such a supposition. But, as it turned out, this was only one act of the drama, and incidents quite as striking were in store. The losing side had very shrewd suspicions that an inordinate amount of money had been illegally spent by the winners, and a petition was talked of. But it is not much use incurring expense in prosecuting an election petition unless you can prove that there was no lack of money. You want also to know where it comes from as well as where it goes to, and that was just where the scent failed. Consequently, the proposal of a petition made no headway until a piece of singular good luck came to the help of the promoters of the petition.

A pupil, on his way to school, picked up a letter in the High Street, Oxford, and showed it to a school-fellow. Neither of them understood what the letter meant, but the boy who was told about it happened to be the son of one of the promoters of the petition. He told his father of the occurrence, and mentioned some particulars contained in the letter. The father charged his son to get hold of the letter somehow and bring it home, and the other boy, having no particular interest in the matter, readily parted with it. The letter, which had dropped out of the pocket of a prominent member of the Conservative party on his way from the bank, stated the source whence came £3000 towards fighting the seat. I suppose ninety-nine loose letters out of a hundred dropped in the street would be

either washed away in the gutter or find a temporary resting-place in the dust-cart, but this one, upon which so much depended, had a very different destiny in store for it. This letter settled the matter. A meeting of the chiefs on the losing side was immediately summoned, and a petition was resolved upon on the strength of the information contained in this letter. The petitioners were too astute to claim the seat, as they knew quite enough about their own doings to render them undesirous of any investigation of them. Their object in presenting the petition was to disqualify the one man whose popularity enabled him to win the seat in the opposite interest.

In due course, two judges, Messrs. Lush and Manisty, arrived to hear the petition. In view of the amount of liquor circulating during the election, it was a curious coincidence that the name of one of the judges should be Lush.

The proceedings were conducted in the Town Hall, which had been fitted up as a Court of Justice. The populace were delighted to take advantage of this gratuitous entertainment, and the Hall was crammed with excited partisans. They started by giving a rousing reception to the sitting Member and his counsel when they entered the Court, just before the judges arrived, and to the horror and astonishment of the latter the audience proceeded to greet the first witness with loud applause, as though he were some favourite actor making his appearance on the stage. In sternly indignant tones, Justice Lush at once ordered the police to bring before him any one who had taken any part in this uproar, in order that he might make an example of him. As most of those present had participated in the demonstration this was rather too large an order for the police to execute, and so no one suffered for their indiscretion. But the judge's remark was quite sufficient to discourage any similar sympathetic manifestations, and after that an almost unnatural calm prevailed.

The proceedings did not last long, and the sitting Member was duly unseated. Then came a great surprise, for instead of the way being cleared for a fresh election,

a Parliamentary Commission was appointed to investigate the doings of both parties.

The Commission sat in due course and for a period of several months. This involved no small cost to the rate-payers generally, who had to defray all the expense of it. The inquiry threw an interesting light upon the methods prevailing in the conduct of elections at that time, and illustrated the ingenuity which could be brought to bear in devising excuses for paying people to vote. There was practically no direct buying and selling of votes, colourable employment and renting of premises being the chief mediums for the distribution of money to voters. For instance, Committee Rooms abounded in almost every street, and a good rent was paid for them. Then the whole city was profusely decorated with flags and colours, and a rent was paid for the windows and house-tops from or on which a flag floated. If a red flag appeared at one house, the next-door occupier rushed round to the District Committee Room at once, and insisted upon exhibiting one as well, on the same terms. It was recognized that if he were not encouraged to do so by the Reds, the Blues would soon snap him up. Then thousands of bills and posters were exhibited on walls and in windows, and rents were again paid for these, and the number of men required to carry one paste-pot and brush was something extraordinary. Then, when the bills were posted, innumerable men had to be employed to watch them, in order to see that the other side did not paste over them or tear them down, and then the services of still more men were required to watch the men who were watching the bills. Then the wives of the voters were taken in hand, and were employed night and day, at a generous remuneration, in making flags to keep pace with the demand for them.

The Conservatives were too busy with their own affairs to take much note of the doings of their opponents, but the latter thought it advisable to have an eye upon the operations of the other side, so they paid a good retaining fee to that Prince of election-organizers, Mr. Schnadhorst, the Secretary of the Birmingham Liberal Association, to watch the other side. Mr. Schnadhorst seems to have

been a little lax in his ideas upon the subject of treating, for the Commissioners informed us that he advised his clients that they might safely provide breakfasts on the polling day to all persons employed in bringing up voters, and the result was that nearly 1000 persons enjoyed this sort of hospitality at Sir William Harcourt's expense. The Commissioners came to the conclusion that this induced "many persons to take an active interest in the election, and to vote, who otherwise would not have done so." Thus was reduced to practice the principle, so often advocated during the election, of a "free breakfast table." Although the other side did not spend money in this particular way, they found many other equally illegal channels for disposing of it.

In this one election, lasting only about a fortnight, the two sides spent between them over £12,000, and a large proportion of this went in expenses which neither party dare own to till they were compelled. The Commissioners, of course, exonerated all the candidates from any participation in or knowledge of any illegalities.

I myself had some personal experience of the Commissioners, for I had to appear before them and tell all I knew. Fortunately, I could do this without any qualms of conscience, but I may say that I am not aware of a more unpleasant Court to be examined in than a Commission Court, as the main object of the President and his satellites is to induce every witness to incriminate himself if possible. Happily, I had nothing to conceal, as I had steered particularly clear of all illegalities, so the Commissioners not only gave me a clean bill of health but stated in their report to Parliament that two districts only, out of the many, were free from the practices upon which they had animadverted. One of the two was the district for which, as chairman of the party Committee of the district, I was responsible, so far as my own side was concerned. People were unkind enough to attribute this more to my artfulness than my innocence, and said that I must have known by anticipation what was going to happen before ever the election took place, or I never should have been so cautious. The fact was, I was a strong opponent of all illegal practices,

and as I kept the expenditure in my district in my own hands I was able to enforce my views, though I cannot say that they were universally approved.

The ultimate outcome of all the fighting was that the Writ was suspended for a year or two, and the city was then, under the last Redistribution Bill, allotted one Member instead of two.

It must be borne in mind that all my remarks have applied to the conduct of elections many years ago, and Oxford was then by no means exceptional in its methods, but it has long since outgrown the old condition of things. The lesson was taken to heart by those who felt its effects, and, in addition, a fresh generation has sprung up, free of the ancient tradition which was too apt to appraise the value of a vote by the price it would fetch.

One lesson which my experiences have brought home to me, as the result of what I have seen and heard is : that politics should never alter friendship, and, ardent politician as I have been and am, I have the consolation, in my old age, of believing that I have never alienated a friendship by my partisanship, and I shall always hope to have many friends on both sides of the House.

In the shaking up of the political kaleidoscope, one can never be sure that the opponent of to-day may not be the compatriot of to-morrow, or *vice versâ*. Of the latter position I have had some experience. Therefore, it is well not to be too elated in the hour of victory, or too depressed in that of defeat.

## CHAPTER XIII

Some Victorian Statesmen—Disraeli—Gladstone—Harcourt—Palmerston  
—Salisbury.

I HAVE heard, either in the House or out of it, most of the Parliamentary orators from about 1860 onwards, and I do not think I ever listened to any of their utterances with so much real pleasure as I did to Disraeli's famous "Ape and Angel Speech," delivered in the days when I was religiously, politically and severely orthodox, according to my lights.

As a preliminary to my recollection of this, I may recall an old memory of my first sight of the great Conservative leader. In 1853 Lord Derby, he who, when Lord Stanley, was "the Rupert of debate," was installed as the Chancellor of Oxford University, in succession to the great Duke of Wellington. On that occasion I stood in the street and saw the Chancellor in his magnificent gold-brocaded robes on his way to the Sheldonian Theatre, accompanied by many notable personages upon whom honorary degrees were to be conferred. Included among them was Disraeli, but I did not then know enough about him to recognize him. In the afternoon, however, I went to a Horticultural Fête, one of the festivities of Commemoration Week, in Worcester College Gardens, and sitting on a seat near where I was standing was a gentleman in the red and pink robes and black velvet squash cap of a Doctor of Civil Law, and I particularly noticed that he had a conspicuous jet-black curl projecting over his forehead. Suddenly some one called out, "Three cheers for Disraeli," which were heartily given, and then the recipient of the compliment rose and solemnly bowed his acknowledgments. When I reached home and told my father what I had seen and heard, he gave me such a glowing account of the gentleman

with the raven lock that I installed him at once in the Valhalla of my young imagination.

The scene of the celebrated speech referred to was the Sheldonian Theatre at Oxford, and it was delivered in November, 1864, at a meeting presided over by Bishop Wilberforce. The object of the meeting was the promotion of a society for the better endowment of small livings; a subject which, on the face of it, did not appear to offer much scope for an oratorical display. But a Parliamentary leader of the stamp of the speaker in question was not likely to allow his remarks to be bounded by the narrow limitations of any pre-arranged subject, particularly when he desired to make a *pronunciamento*; there is no doubt, too, that his hearers would have been woefully disappointed if he had not made the opportunity he wanted. His audience was mainly composed of the leading lights of the University in the semicircle, a great crowd of undergraduates in the gallery, and a packed mass of country clergy and country squires in the area. Among the latter company I managed to jam myself. It could hardly be said that Dizzy dressed for the part of a champion of orthodoxy, for instead of the dignified frock-coat, then usually worn by lay-speakers on religious platforms with other garments to harmonize therewith, he had donned a black velvet jacket and light-coloured waistcoat and trousers, whilst he carried a billycock in place of a tall hat.

The great attraction of the speech to me was not merely its transcendent cleverness but the unstudied ease of its delivery. There was no effort apparent with respect to either matter or manner. The exactly-fitting word dropped into its proper place in every sentence without the slightest attempt to find a better and without a particle of hesitation. With folded arms and the impassiveness of the Sphinx, the speaker, apparently oblivious of his audience, communed, as it were, with himself. He left his hearers to discover his points for themselves and to punctuate his epigrams if they were so minded, and this they did with enthusiastic alacrity, though, so far as you could interpret his feelings by his looks, it was a matter of perfect indifference to Disraeli whether they did or not. There was no straining

after effect, no rhetorical tricks, yet for polished sarcasm and veiled invective it was almost unsurpassable. Sentences of coruscating brilliance fell from his lips as though they were the merest commonplaces. Yet it must have been carefully thought out, inasmuch as it was a trumpet-call to the Church in view of an approaching election. Of course the main object of the speech, from a political point of view, was to impress upon the High and Low Church that they must look to the Conservative Party to protect the faith against the Latitudinarianism of the Broad Church. While time has vindicated many of the views he so unsparingly attacked and has discounted some of his predictions, he crystallized a great truth in the pregnant sentence at the opening of his address, "Why, my lord, man is born to believe!" That was to say that, if men were dissuaded from accepting the truths of Christianity, they would fall back upon other beliefs which the votaries of the Higher Criticism would have to admit were but poor substitutes.

The most telling and most highly appreciated portions of his speech were those in which Disraeli came to close grips, first with the critical school of religious thought represented by Jowett, Temple, Stanley, and Colenso, and next with the advanced views of such scientists as Darwin, Huxley, and Spencer. But what did more than all the rest to impress the seal of fame upon the speech was a question put by the speaker and answered by himself with reference to evolution. Said Dizzy, "What is the question now placed before society with a glib assurance most astounding? The question is this—Is man an ape or an angel? My lord, I am on the side of the angels." This was but a bald assertion, not comparable with the intellectual finish of most of the speech, but it brought down the house. An outburst of rapturous approval, on the part of his auditors, followed the termination of every sentence which took the war into the enemy's country, but the storm of laughter and applause greeting this sally was something to remember.

*Punch* the following week had a most delightful cartoon, a copy of which I happily possess, representing Dizzy, in

the white robes of an angel, adjusting his wings before a looking-glass. The speech, while a clever piece of electioneering, was so far genuine in sentiment that it did express the speaker's innate distrust, as shown in many other ways, of anything that, as he thought, had a tendency to undermine religious faith, which was likely to be the effect of mere intellectuality in religion and mere materialism in science. The main weakness of the speech lay in its inability, either real or assumed, to understand the minds and motives of those it attacked, who, after all, were earnest and highly-gifted searchers after truth. Under any circumstances I am very glad that I managed to squeeze myself into the Sheldonian Theatre on that memorable occasion, and heard so fine an example of fascinating eloquence.

Since recording the impressions left upon my mind that memorable afternoon, I have read the speech itself, and I think its zenith of picturesque expression was reached in the passage which followed Disraeli's description of the effects of the French Revolution upon Europe. This passage seems so suitable for reproduction at the present moment that I cannot forbear from quoting it. Amid an impressive stillness, which rendered every syllable effective, the speaker said :

"When the turbulence is over—when the shout of triumph and the wail of agony are alike stilled—when, as it were, the waters have subsided, the sacred heights of Sinai and Calvary are again revealed, and amid the wreck of thrones and tribunals, of extinct nations and abolished laws, mankind, tried by so many sorrows, purified by so much suffering, and wise with such unprecedented experience, bows again before the Divine truths that Omnipotence in His ineffable wisdom has entrusted to the custody and the promulgation of a chosen people."

So may it be when the blest stillness of peace succeeds the carnival of bloodshed which wrings the heart of Europe to-day !

I heard Dizzy's great rival, Gladstone, speak on several occasions, and a more emphatic contrast in matter, method, and manner than the two presented could hardly be

imagined. For real, genuine impassioned oratory of the Demosthenes school, Gladstone, when at red-heat, was, I should say, unsurpassable. His command of language, his mastery of detail, and his finely-tempered persuasiveness were great assets, and superadded to these were a well-modulated voice, an accent with just enough of the Lancashire burr to add to its attractiveness, and a natural appropriateness of gesture which added force to all he said. I had the good fortune to hear him when he was in his most emotional condition, at the opening of his "Bulgarian atrocities" campaign, and I think it was his first speech in the provinces upon the subject. For fierceness of denunciation and wealth of invective I never heard its equal, and every line in the orator's face, so full of expression was it, emphasized his words. No speaker could rouse passionate enthusiasm in supporters or rampant hostility in opponents so effectively as Gladstone, and this was to a great extent accounted for by his depth of feeling and terrible earnestness. Much abler pens than mine have said all that can be said on the subject, and I merely record the impression such a speech left on the mind of so ordinary a person as myself. For tragic force, Gladstone was as incomparable in the Parliamentary arena as Edmund Kean was on the stage. It was said of the latter that he was the only actor who could rise to the pitch of making his own hair stand on end when the part required it.

I have never heard that the Grand Old Man possessed the same gift, but I can quite believe in his capability of fetching other people's hair straight upright. He certainly worked to some purpose upon the feelings of one person of my acquaintance. A lady friend of mine, who had never previously heard Gladstone speak, persuaded me to take her to the meeting to which I have been referring. Knowing her strong attachment to the opposite party in politics, I recommended her to forego the pleasure, but in vain. We had secured front seats in a packed assemblage, but after ten minutes of the overwhelming verbal torrent she implored me to get her out at once or she would not answer for the consequences. Her feelings were wrought up to such a pitch of furious indignation at the speaker's onslaught

upon the Government that she was liable to give utterance to them in a shriek at any moment. So I lost no time in fulfilling her behest, with the help of a friendly policeman. Having got her safely outside the building, I returned to enjoy the remainder of the anathemas. One could never imagine that Gladstone could have much sense of humour; he seemed to soar so far above any such purely mundane weakness as that, taking himself much too seriously to admit of it. This was borne out by the solemnity with which he unconsciously aided and abetted the artful Randolph, when the latter, with his tongue in his cheek, politely invited the old man to stand up and be shot at. Had his lordship been in the present Parliament I doubt if he would have had so good a time with the present Premier as he had with his old antagonist.

But Gladstone, on occasion, could be full of gentle suavity, when his grace of diction was something to envy. Then the universality of his knowledge was amazing, for there seemed to be no subject upon which he could not discourse with full understanding and fluency. I was present once when he was in the chair at a meeting at which the late Mr. John Henry Parker, the publisher, antiquary, and great authority on ecclesiastical architecture and kindred subjects, read a paper on recent excavations at Rome, in which the reader had greatly interested himself. Gladstone opened the proceedings in a scholarly address, and then apparently composed himself to sleep. We felt sorry for Mr. Parker, who plodded manfully through his task, while he for whose benefit it was mainly intended slumbered on peacefully. When the paper came to an end Gladstone's guardian angel, in the person of his devoted wife, gave him a nudge, and he opened his eyes with a start. Then, to our utter astonishment, he discoursed most learnedly upon the chief points of the paper, and supplemented the information it contained with a good deal of his own. I don't know how he managed it, because, if he wasn't asleep, it was a very good imitation of it. There were giants in those days.

Harcourt was an entirely different type of speaker to either of the two rival Parliamentary gladiators. Yet he

was very effective, in attack especially. Although it seems almost incredible, when I first heard him speak he was a thin, willowy young man of somewhat retiring and diffident manners. It was in my Volunteer days when we had a sham-fight in Nuneham Park. Young Harcourt, as he was then, without any handle to his name, welcomed us, on behalf of his father, and invited us to partake of a cold collation, which we did. As already narrated in a previous chapter, he ultimately became one of the Parliamentary representatives of the City of Oxford, and after that he expanded both physically and in other ways. He developed Falstaffian proportions of body and a confidence in himself which his friends described as firmness and his foes as truculence. He was about as trenchant a critic in speech as could be found, and when he was on the war-path we knew the injunction "Cry aloud and spare not" would be acted upon without reserve. When, however, he was in a genial mood he resembled the American judge at his mother-in-law's funeral, who, according to the Press report, "mingled grave thoughts with refined pleasantry." He was a master of quips and cranks and carefully thought-out impromptus—though of a somewhat ponderous type, suggesting that, like the Scotchman of tradition, he "joked wi' deeficulty." The effectiveness of his sarcasm and verbal castigations was much helped by the depth of feeling he could put into his voice when so minded. For instance, nothing could exceed the scorn and contempt conveyed by his pronounciation of the name of one whom he apparently regarded with loathing and always described as Mr. "Deesrarli," with a long-drawn-out accent on the "ar." Yet it was well known that, in ordinary life, the two were on terms of intimate friendship. Still, the last of the Plantagenets was always worth listening to, if only for the sake of his apposite quotations from many of the hundred best books and the facility with which he could drive home an argument by means of happily-conceived illustration. In matter and manner of speech he was one of the old school, and carried on the traditions of the period in which Peel and his compeers flourished. It was a thought-out oratory with carefully-turned sentences, in contradistinction to the

more free-and-easy Parliamentary style of to-day. I know of one survivor only who still carries on the tradition, and, strange to say, he has no affinity with the political opinions held by Sir William. The old Parliamentary hand whom I have in my mind is Henry, now Lord, Chaplin, who, though without aiming at the brilliancy which Harcourt had at his command, has just the same measured stride and that touch of classic grace and artistic finish characteristic of the older school in which both Harcourt and he graduated.

Harcourt was in the habit of carefully preparing his speeches and committing them to memory. On one occasion he had to deliver a long political address at a public dinner at Oxford, and several pressmen came down the same day from London to report it for the daily papers. On examining the toast list they found that Sir William would not have spoken before the last train that night had left for town, and they were all anxious to get back. They therefore waited upon him and presented their case. He at once very good-naturedly said :

"Gentlemen, if you will come this afternoon to my room at the Randolph Hotel I will deliver my speech to you by anticipation and you can catch your train."

He was as good as his word, and so well did he stick to the text of it that no one, except the reporters, were any the wiser.

Mr. H. F. Bussey, a Parliamentary reporter, in his *Sixty Years of Journalism*, recently published, gives an illustration which corroborates this description of Harcourt's methods. Harcourt had made a brilliant speech at a meeting, and says Mr. Bussey :

"I was seated opposite to him, and when he had finished he leant across the table and asked if there was any reporter there who represented the *Times*. Handing over a bundle of papers to me, he said he would rather I should supply the speech they contained to the *Times* than any notes I might have taken ; but, he added, it would be as well if I would interject any of the usual parenthetical cheers and so forth, so as to make the report more complete. This I did, and next morning the *Times* came out with three columns of Mr. Harcourt's speech."

Sir William's elder brother, Colonel E. W. Harcourt, who inherited the Nuneham and Stanton Harcourt estates, sat in the House of Commons, as one of the Parliamentary representatives of Oxford County, at the same time as Sir William represented the City. The Colonel, being a staunch Conservative, invariably voted in a different lobby from his brother. One day, in the presence of Sir William, he lamented the latter's Radicalism, and was met by the rejoinder from his brother :

"Ah, if I had succeeded to the family estates I should probably have been as good a Conservative as you are, Edward."

Sir William ultimately came into the property, as he outlived his brother. The Colonel was an excellent specimen of the old type of county member, who busied himself in the affairs of his county and then gave the country the benefit of his knowledge and experience whenever such questions as main roads, the incidence of rating, agricultural tenures, etc., cropped up. His uncle sat for the county as a Liberal, and I remember seeing him escorted to the nomination by his mounted tenantry, and preceded by a goodly number of blood-red banners before all such election vanities were dispensed with by Act of Parliament.

My recollections of two other speakers contemporary with Disraeli and Gladstone are mainly fragmentary, and must be briefly summed up. Palmerston, as he spoke, seemed to me a good embodiment of the average Briton, cheery and self-confident, satisfied with his own infallibility and of everything being for the best in the best of all possible worlds, untroubled by many conscientious doubts or scruples, and with just that touch of the sportsman without which he would not have been a typical Englishman. One listened to him with interest and amusement, without one's feelings being ever aroused or one's pulse stirred. I heard the late Professor John Thorold Rogers, who sat as Radical M.P. for Southwark, say that Palmerston was the worst enemy, in the disguise of a friend, Liberalism ever had ; and this was true enough if it meant that he was a drag upon the wheel of advancing democracy.

Salisbury, the personification of cultured calm, spoke in

the spirit of a political philosopher "full of wise saws and modern instances," which were delivered with so little elocutionary effort that one did not half appreciate their value till one saw them in print afterwards. His utterances gave one the impression that he was an absolute master of everything he touched. There are plenty of people much better qualified than myself to write of the speakers of to-day, so I will forbear doing so.

## CHAPTER XIV

The Victorian Drama—The Patent Monopoly—The Status of the Profession—The Queen's Influence—Early Theatrical Experiences—Behind the Scenes—The Old Stock-Company Days.

I SHOULD be assuming a virtue when I had it not, were I to omit from these chapters of a life any reference to my career as a pleasure-goer, and so, in relation to this, the Drama claims a very prominent place. I have taken a fair toll of the world's amusements, and I would not, by my silence, have it inferred otherwise. "*Dulce est desipere in loco,*" says Horace, and, acting upon this, I have, whenever reasonably possible, moderated the tension of a hard-working life by seeking relaxation in the playhouse. I will go a step further, and say that I am so far unrepentant that I do not desire to revoke the many happy hours I have spent there. Beyond this—though it is of secondary consideration—no picture of the days of Victoria would be even remotely complete that failed to take the Stage and its influences into account. Our greatest of Queens, previous to her widowhood, was one of the very staunchest supporters of the Drama, and her successors have followed in her footsteps. Fortified by this double-barrelled reason I shall, regardless of consequences, frankly lay bare my own theatrical proclivities and how I gratified them. Those among my readers who think I might have been better employed than in recording my personal frivolities will kindly skip this portion of my experiences, as being outside the sphere of their proper observation.

The chief incident in theatrical history during the Victorian regime was the abolition, in 1843, of the "Patent" monopoly, which was the great loosening of the Drama's fetters. Up to this time a policy of Protection had been

pursued towards the legitimate Drama, by restricting the right of its representation to theatres possessing a Royal patent, which, in earlier days, was only obtainable by dint of considerable scheming or the exercise of questionable influences. In London, Drury Lane and Covent Garden were the only theatres wherein the legitimate Drama could be played. As the population increased, smaller theatres sprang up and were licensed, but only under considerable restrictions. Their sphere of representation was limited to short musical pieces, and if they went beyond this they were immediately proceeded against by the Patent Theatres. This state of things came to an end, and something like a system of Free Trade in such amusements was inaugurated, when Parliament deprived the Patent houses of all their privileges, except that of being exempt from a yearly renewal of a licence to act. Plenty of people predicted that this measure would bring about the downfall of the National Drama by its practical abolition of National Theatres, which were regarded as centres for the concentration of histrionic talent. The stimulating air of competition is, however, usually much more invigorating than the closer atmosphere of monopoly, and its effect, in this instance, was not to deaden but to quicken the Drama's life. In point of fact, the old system of privileged houses was detrimental both to the author and the actor, restricting so greatly as it did the area of competition. Another disadvantage arising out of it was the necessarily large dimensions of the theatres which were thus protected, for, when there were so few to minister to the cravings of all London, the public could not otherwise be accommodated. Their size rendered them, to a great extent, unsuitable for pieces not of a spectacular character, and was prejudicial to the cultivation of much refinement and delicacy in impersonation. Under our present system our larger theatres can be reserved for pieces of a spectacular and melodramatic nature, where the effects are broader, and the eye is more especially appealed to, whilst plays of a less pronounced type, and where subtlety of individual characterization is a distinguishing feature, can find in smaller houses a more congenial home. The result of the change was a

multiplication of playhouses, the patronage bestowed upon which is the best evidence that they were required to meet the public demand. This has been followed by greater freedom in other directions.

The Drama of to-day owes much to the Victorian era, and this has resulted in an increased support accorded to it by all sections of the public and every class of society, from Royalty downwards. The leading theatres, speaking generally, have lived up to a high standard, but, at the same time, one cannot help doubting whether there was any form of theatrical entertainment in the old days quite so barren of intellectual quality—and, in fact, of everything of quality, except the mounting—as the so-called “revue” of to-day. The old extravaganzas and burlesques did really parody something or another in a cheery spirit, free of offence, while their present successors are mainly a series of music-hall turns, with little rhyme or reason to justify their introduction or to account for it. But the scenery, costumes and accessories are gorgeous, so the eye is captivated at the expense of the understanding. It must be conceded that all classes of playgoers, whose tastes are healthy, are entitled to be considered, and, so long as there is a wide difference of opinion as to what constitutes humour, we cannot too strictly circumscribe its area. Those who appreciate it only in its subtlest forms consider some types of it as little better than buffoonery or horse-play; but it is impossible to listen to the hearty laughter of many who enjoy the latter without realizing its recreative utility. This, of course, assumes that there is nothing unwholesome in that which engenders the laugh; there is no sort of harm in fun, though it may be of the rough-and-tumble kind, provided it is honest and in season. The old saying, “What is one man’s meat is another man’s poison,” is applicable to plays as well as food. Nevertheless, I think the limit is reached before we get to the revue.

In the days of Victoria a distinct improvement set in in the social status of the profession itself, which is now recruited from all ranks of society, and the natural result has been that the actor himself has had more respect for

it, and a stronger desire to uphold, in his individual capacity, the dignity which properly belongs to it. Nor is this all. The Stage has obtained recognition in the highest intellectual circles in a very marked degree. This was shown when, contrary to all precedent, Irving was invited by the University of Oxford to discourse to it upon his art. He was the guest of the Vice-Chancellor, who was not only a cleric but a scholar of European reputation, and his address was listened to with respect and admiration by an assemblage which, even in Oxford, has rarely been exceeded in intellectual brilliancy. As the mouthpiece of such a gathering, the Vice-Chancellor bore eloquent testimony to the value of the art whose exponent the University delighted to honour. Other abodes of education and culture have held out the right hand of fellowship to the dramatic art, and the Church itself has not been behind-hand. The Church Congress has promoted the Drama to a place on its list of subjects worthy of discussion, and one of our leading actresses discoursed upon her profession to an august assemblage of clerical dignitaries, from the Archbishop downwards, and received a warm and sympathetic welcome.

The judicious patronage of Queen Victoria and her Consort did a great deal for the Drama, not only by making theatre-going *de rigueur* but by imposing a beneficial restraint upon the playhouse in more directions than one. This was brought forcibly home to me when I acquired a large mass of correspondence addressed to Benjamin Webster, at the time he was the lessee of the Haymarket Theatre, in the forties and fifties. Among the letters were some from Colonel Sir Charles Phipps, Keeper of the Queen's Purse, conveying the Queen's wishes with respect to the Stage, one of which is worth quoting, as evidence of Her Majesty's desire to keep the Theatre as far as possible free from offence. Attention had been called to the way in which ladies of indifferent reputation, or no reputation at all, flaunted themselves with conspicuous effrontery in the higher-priced parts of the house especially. This was a heritage from previous reigns, when the courtesan was regarded by society as part and parcel of our social system.

One of the first duties the Queen took upon herself, upon ascending the Throne, was to bring her influence to bear upon purifying the court and society generally, and she naturally took the evil above referred to in hand. So Sir Charles wrote to Webster as follows :

"Buckingham Palace.

"February 27th, 1849.

"MY DEAR SIR—

"I was much obliged to you for your letter, and for the assurance that the desired reform would be fully carried out. I am confident that the Police will receive directions to give you every assistance that the Law allows, and what I understood from Mr. Mayne, when I saw him in the presence of Sir George Grey, was this, that a Proprietor of a Theatre could make any regulations as to the terms upon which persons were admitted to his house that he pleased, and that the Police would be justified in assisting him or his servants in carrying out any such regulations. The proof that the reform might be carried out was previously ascertained at the Lyceum, because if these Women could be excluded from the Boxes they might undoubtedly be *as legally* forbidden to enter the Pit. I can assure you that no previous notice had been sent to Mr. Matthews. At the time that he asked for the Queen's patronage of his Theatre and that Her Majesty would take a box at the Lyceum, his requests were assented to upon the *distinct proviso* that this regulation was to be carried out at his house, and this was the only notice that he received upon the Subject—nor was it probable that any partiality would be shewn to that Theatre over the Hay-market.

"You do me but justice in believing me to be sincerely anxious for the prosperity of the English Stage. I am so from natural taste and long-indulged habit, but I am so because I am certain that the Drama may be, and ought to be, not only an unexceptionable but a highly-instructive and useful amusement for the most delicate and the most moral, and I am sure that as the objections of the puritanical can be proved to be imaginary, in exactly the same proportion will the Theatres flourish. You may at first lose a few half-price loungers, but the influence, neither of Patronage, nor of Fashion, can ever have so strong an influence upon the public support of the Drama as the

certainly that the Theatre can be frequented without throwing unnecessary incentives to Vice in the way of the Sons, or hurting the delicacy of the daughters of the respectable classes.

"I am anxious that you should fully understand the interest that *I* take in this subject. The Queen's motive is a more direct and a higher one. Her Majesty considers that if, by Her Patronage, she endeavours to induce a more frequent attendance at the National Theatres, She is bound to insist that this shall not be at the risk of injury to the morals of the people.

"Sincerely yours,

"C. B. PHIPPS."

My father was not only a confirmed playgoer but a recognized writer of what, in his day, and part of mine, were standing features of dramatic performances—prologues and epilogues, of which he was a prolific producer. Whenever a theatrical performance was given on behalf of any local charity, his pen was invariably requisitioned for a supply of rhyming couplets, appropriate to the occasion. Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that I developed a taste for the Drama at a very early stage in my career. This was greatly stimulated by a birthday presentation from my parents of one of those delightful toys, now rarely seen or heard of, known as a model theatre, and accompanied by that stock-piece of most Lilliputian playhouses, entitled *The Miller and his Men*. Full of managerial pride, I used, when I could secure their attendance, to submit this exciting melodrama to a select and discriminating audience, all of whom were on the free-list, consisting of my mother, a younger brother, some kindred spirits about my own age, and a privileged domestic who might be trusted to applaud at intervals. Other plays, when I could afford them, were added, including *Guy Fawkes*, *The Red Rover*, and *The Wood Demon*. Alas, the fate of many a theatre befel mine! Being a manager of enterprise and resource, I was not satisfied for my establishment to be dependent solely for its illumination upon such rays as were diffused by the two "composites" which did duty for the whole room. So I installed a separate system

of lighting in close proximity to the stage, with the natural result that I set fire to the scenery and characters, and very nearly to the parlour-curtains, to the alarm of the audience. My mother, equal to the emergency, seized the hearth-rug and enveloped the conflagration and the play-house in it at one and the same time, neither of which survived her efforts.

It was some time after this, in 1854, that I first saw a play acted by other than pasteboard performers. The date is fixed in my mind because it was in the winter of the Crimean War. The players, who were commissioned officers, assisted by professional ladies, devoted the profits to the Patriotic Fund, and my father, as usual, supplied the two prologues required, one for each night. To me they were hours of unalloyed bliss, for a new and romantic world, of which previously I had known little except by reading and hearsay, was revealed to me. After that, I longed to make further acquaintance with this enchanted land, and in this Fortune favoured me. The manager of our provincial theatre, being a personal friend of my father, who rendered him some essential service, put me on the free-list, and, so long as my school preparation work did not suffer, which meant my foregoing other recreations and getting up early in the morning, I was allowed many a night at the Theatre.

Every votary of the Drama I ever dropped across has a burning desire to go "behind the scenes," and I was no exception to the rule. As soon as Thespis, at a very early period of my career, had marked me for his own, I began to yearn for a glimpse of that enchanted region the other side of the footlights. There is only one real "behind the scenes"—where the professionals live and move and have their being; nobody, of course, has any interest in any land peopled by mere amateurs. We all know too much about Brown, Jones and Robinson, who annually emerge from their native obscurity for a couple of nights in order to tread the baize on behalf of a deserving charity, to care a rap about what they do when not disporting themselves in front. Long before I left school I compassed my desire, and in this wise. Edward Hooper, at that time the lessee

of both the Oxford and Cambridge Theatres, and before then of the Bath Theatre, was an intimate friend of my father, and frequently dined and spent the day with us on Sunday. He had been stage-manager of the Lyceum when Charles Matthews and Madame Vestris produced, with such taste and artistic elegance, those fairy and classical extravaganzas with which the polished pen of a Planché supplied them.

Hooper was afterwards lessee of the St. James's Theatre, and, at one time and another, played with every actor of note from Edmund Kean downwards during what is known as "the palmy days of the Drama." He began his life as a midshipman, and, being wounded at the battle of Navarino, he retired upon a pension and took to the Stage. He was a wonderfully good *raconteur*, and I used to delight in listening to his flow of reminiscences over the wine and walnuts, when he and my father opened the flood-gates of memory. My father often saw him play in his younger days—Charles Surface being one of his great parts. He was one of the handsomest old men I ever saw, and was known throughout the profession, by virtue of both his manners and appearance, as "Gentleman Ned." He carried with him just that air of refinement and distinction which one associates with the old comedies of the Goldsmith and Sheridan type. To him, then, I addressed my petition to be taken behind the scenes, just for once. He resisted my appeal for some time, assuring me that it would be a cruel kindness to grant a privilege that would shatter all my ideals. However, I persisted, and, as he was one of the kindest-hearted men who ever breathed, he yielded at last to my importunities. So one night he put me in a chair on the O.P. side of the stage, and there left me to my fate. Then I soon discovered that all things are not what they seem, and, for the benefit of others with like aspirations to mine, I will briefly narrate some of my experiences of that eventful night, in the hope that it may do something to save them from similar disillusionment.

The evening's incidents were decidedly more commonplace than dramatic, when they were not part of the stage-play, which was that fine old-crusted nautical melodrama,

*The Wreck Ashore.* In the first place, stage scenery, undoubtedly, will not stand the test of near inspection; everything seemed so unreal at close quarters. Then, what I saw and heard of the dramatis personæ in the intervals of acting, was quite sufficient to convince any one that they were not exempt from the little weaknesses of ordinary mortals. For instance, my surprise was intense when, after an animated conversation between two ladies of the company on the stage after the curtain was down, one of the twain fetched the other a smart smack in the face. This administered to me a shock like a douche of cold water. If it were really a demonstration of hostility, it would have accorded so much better with my notions of stage manners and customs had the aggrieved one suddenly drawn a dagger from her bosom and plunged it into her rival's breast. If, on the other hand, as was most probable, it was nothing but a little playfulness, then it seemed out of harmony with that dignified restraint with which I credited the exponents of the Drama. I never learnt whether the ladies were in jest or earnest, as they disappeared immediately after the small affair.

One of the members of the company was a middle-aged man, who had taken to the stage rather late in life. It was said that he had been an undergraduate who, after repeated failures to satisfy the examiners, joined the theatrical profession. Although he was not often entrusted with much more than one-line parts, he shared with many others similarly situated the delusion that he was a born actor; an impression more destitute of foundation in his case than in most others. On this particular night he had to deliver himself of a very commonplace piece of information, but he gave utterance to it with the solemn impressiveness of a judge passing a death-sentence. Having done so, he spied me out in my corner, and at once made for me, and requested my candid opinion of his acting. I was greatly flattered at this, and assured him that it left nothing to be desired in impressiveness—which was strictly true. Then, with deep earnestness, and in an anxious tone I shall always remember, he put to me the searching question:

“Did I hang fire at all?”

I asseverated my conviction that no one could have put more force into a sentence than he did. Having expressed his satisfaction at what I had told him, he wrung my hand in gratitude, and left, apparently much relieved in mind. It was not often, I expect, that the poor chap got such consolation as I had to offer.

Shortly after that, I was approached by another member of the company, a regular old stager of the "general utility" type, who asked for my help. He explained that, being engaged in the piece, he was unable to leave the theatre to obtain some much-needed refreshment. Would I procure it for him? Of course I would. This was an honour that I dreamt not of. Whereupon, he thrust a jug into my hands and bid me take it to a neighbouring hostelry with a view to its being filled with malt liquor. As I waited for the wherewithal to pay the score, he remarked that the mention of his name to the tapster would be "quite sufficient." So I sallied forth on my errand, but whether the name in question was "quite sufficient" or not is more than my memory vouchsafes to say. However, I am quite sure that, were it not, I should never have allowed the success of the piece to be jeopardized by the possible collapse of one of the dramatis personæ for want of necessary sustenance. At any rate, I returned with a brimming jug. My friend was anxiously awaiting me, and was appropriately grateful for the service I had rendered him, and he did not put me in the position of having to state whether or not his name carried the weight he had anticipated it would. As I was not anxious to be entrusted with any similar errands, I thought it about time to clear out. In this I think I was wise, because, if it became noised abroad that there was a young gentleman at the wings who had the gift of procuring drinkables on trust, I should probably have had a busy time. So, after listening to some very pungent criticisms indulged in by some of the principals, anent the exacting nature, with respect to rehearsals, etc., of the duties imposed upon them by the management, I made a silent exit from the scene.

My curiosity had been gratified at the expense of my imagination, but I thought it well to exercise a judicious

reticence as to this. So, when I confided to a few kindred, but less fortunate, spirits information of the great privilege I had been permitted to enjoy of admission within the enchanted region behind the footlights, I declined to go into any particulars on the ground that it would be a betrayal of confidence. They had to be content with significant shrugs and winks, supposed to betoken that I had seen and heard things not to be openly spoken of. I should have liked to have told them and my readers that I had visited a veritable fairy-land, far removed in its romanticism from the ignoble world that ordinary mortals lived in, just as Pip in *Great Expectations* beguiled his listeners after his visit to Miss Havisham. But I was never an adept at concocting improbable stories. Later on in life, I spent many weary hours behind the scenes of the professional stage—as I will confess in due course—in listening at rehearsals to tired actors murdering, as I thought, my choicest lines by their own idiotic interpellations, this being one of the penalties of authorship. But none of these occasions stand out in memory as does that of my first introduction to “behind the scenes.” A more intimate acquaintance in later life with professionals enables me to testify that, speaking generally, they are a hard-working section of the community, whose primary object in life is to carry out, with as much éclat to themselves as possible, the particular business for which they are engaged.

These were the old “stock-company” days, when the programme was changed nearly every night, and the season’s plays included most of the old standard tragedies and comedies, interspersed with more recent melodramas and farces, so that I was soon on intimate terms with the works of Shakespeare, Goldsmith, Sheridan, and other dramatists of the old school, to whom previous generations had pinned their faith. Theatrical methods have considerably altered since the times of which I write. Then the manager of a provincial theatre gathered together an all-round company, selected with an eye to a fair rendering of any ordinary piece of the best type, and settled down with it for some months in one place. This meant much hard

and continuous study on the part of the actors, but it is generally agreed that it afforded an excellent training for the profession, and the opportunity of acquiring a vast amount of practical experience in all walks of the Drama. The advantage to the provincial public was that it gave them a more frequent opportunity than now of becoming acquainted with the highest forms of the Drama. At the same time, it necessarily meant a much more rough-and-ready treatment of plays than we are now accustomed to under the "travelling company" system, with its very limited programme. This allows for a finish and completeness, both in acting and mounting, otherwise unattainable.

Under the older system, the actors became, to a certain extent, part and parcel of the little community among whom they sojourned. Off the stage they were objects of interest to the playgoers, and, in many cases, they made friends and had circles of admirers, who were attracted to the theatre in order to see how their favourite deputed himself in a particular part. It may be safely said that all the leading actors and actresses of the Victorian era served their apprenticeship under the stock-company system, many of whom I saw myself in their salad days.

## CHAPTER XV

The Young Man in the Cape—Kean—Matthews—Astley's—*The Colleen Bawn*.

IN connection with the stock-company days, I remember, in particular, a tall, thin, pale young man, who played leading parts during two or three seasons in the provincial theatre of which I had the *entrée*. He was very versatile, and, after appearing in the principal piece, whether tragedy, comedy or melodrama, would not infrequently take part in the farce to follow. He kept himself very much to himself off the stage and invariably went about alone. His one recreation, when frequent rehearsals permitted it, was fishing, and he pursued it with one eye on his part and the other on his float. He spent little upon his ordinary costume, and usually wore an Inverness cape, a common substitute in those days for an overcoat, which covered all else. He worked hard for a salary which did not allow much margin over expenditure. Though somewhat a man of mystery, he established himself as a stage-favourite, his great part, in the estimation of his admirers, being Bob Brierly, in *The Ticket of Leave Man*. One day, in conversation with the manageress of the theatre, I made, with youthful presumption, some disparaging remark with respect to one of this actor's impersonations. She looked me very seriously in the face, and, in a tone of solemn conviction, uttered this remarkable prophecy :

"You may say what you like about him, but the day will come when he will be acclaimed as the greatest actor on the English Stage. It is in him, and it is bound to come out. I may not live to see it, but you probably will."

She died not long after this, but her words remained with me, and they were forcibly recalled as I read of that extraordinary scene of enthusiasm at the Lyceum Theatre

when the young man of the Inverness cape took all London by storm in *The Bells*. I thought then he was well on the way to fulfil the prophecy, and, after seeing his *Hamlet*, the world at general put him at the very head of his profession. Yet I saw him in the earlier days play the Prince of Denmark to a half-empty house. On another occasion I was present, when he and two brother-actors shared a benefit between them, when the triple combination was insufficient to attract a paying audience, and, on totalling up the receipts, it was found that, as they did not meet the expenses, there was nothing to divide.

When Irving visited Bath in 1905 and unveiled the tablet to Quin, my having some part in the ceremony gave me an excuse for a chat with him about old times. Never one of those proud spirits, who regard their struggling days as best forgotten, he enjoyed my recalling of them, and was especially delighted with my testimony to the prophetic instinct of his old manageress.

I doubt if there is any one now living who can recall Irving in as many different characters as I can. Many of the parts in which I saw him in the provinces he ceased to play after reaching London, and when I was in Town—which was not infrequently—I always, in his Lyceum days, made tracks for that theatre, not only because I was a great admirer of Irving but also because, as history was my favourite study, I delighted in the graphic portrayal and archæological detail which brought historical periods so vividly before one. Fault used to be found with his voice, his pronunciation, his gait and his mannerisms, and with some show of reason, but his critics lost sight of the intellectual force, the originality of conception and high cultivation which dominated the whole. The greater Irving's physical defects, the greater that triumph of mind over matter which, in spite of them, led his audience captive.

Beyond the intellectual pleasure arising from his histrionic talent, the world owes much to Irving for the taste and scholarship he brought to bear in the presentation of the classic drama, invoking as he did the aid of the highest authorities in art and archæology, in order that full justice might be done to it. It is not too much to say

of him that he left his mark upon and raised the tone of everything in connection with the Stage that he touched. It is true that Macready, Kean and Phelps had gone far in the same direction before his time, but he, with greater power and influence, was able to better their methods. Irving did much also to improve the status of the profession by the dignity with which he bore himself in it, and the high ideals he followed, thus obtaining for himself and brother-actors a recognition in circles not very ready previously to accord this.

The celestial fire does not descend only and invariably upon those whose elocution and bodily shape are faultless. I saw Charles Kean, the actor-manager most akin to Irving, who, in the fifties, drew the town, alike by his acting and his scholarly Shakespearean revivals. Yet he was a little, insignificant man, with a pronunciation suggestive of a chronic cold in the head. Nevertheless, before he had been on the stage five minutes, you had lost sight of everything but the individuality of the character he was representing. When I heard him, as Henry V., deliver that magnificent address to his soldiers under the walls of Harfleur, I seemed to see only a monarch towering above everybody in his impassioned outburst of splendid patriotism. So it was with Irving, whose histrionic range was far wider than Kean's, and who was endowed with a much more sympathetic personality.

I will not weary my readers by any attempt to recall to memory even a tithe of the host of plays and players coming within my sphere of recollection. Suffice it to say that I think I must have seen, at one time or another, nearly every actor and actress of the front rank who trod the boards during the second half of the last century. In my young days I had many excuses for visiting London, and at nightfall the theatre claimed me. I always took Shakespeare for choice, or, failing that, either Opera of the Offenbachian type, burlesque of the Byronic brand, or, later, of Gilbert and Sullivan; so that it might be said that I oscillated between the sublime and the ridiculous.

To my mind Charles Matthews was, in light comedy, unsurpassable. His was the *ars est celare artem* in perfection.

His delicate grace and abandon were so natural that they seemed to spring spontaneously out of the impulse of the moment. I saw him in all his best parts, and think he touched his zenith as Sir Charles Coldstream in *Used Up*. The contrast between the blasé man-about-town, who had tasted every pleasure in life and found "nothing in it," and the same individual, after his dormant faculties had been roused by the discovery of something worth living for, was a masterpiece of natural acting.

I shall never forget the first time I ever saw Charles Matthews, though I put it on record with a guilty conscience, for, while it testifies to a devotion to the drama and a spirit of adventure, at the same time, it bears witness to a distinct deviation on my part, and at an early age, from the path of rectitude. But reminiscences, to be worth anything, must be truthful. In the latter fifties a younger brother and myself were sent to spend a portion of our summer holidays in London. Once upon a time, my father became possessed of a furnished house in London, situated near Primrose Hill. As it lacked a tenant, in the innocence of his heart he placed a female caretaker, with a small family, in charge of it, with a view to her receiving likely renters, and expatiating to them upon its great advantages as a domicile. I may here observe, for the benefit of any one similarly blessed, or otherwise, with house-property, that my father, after a long wait for a tenant, came to the conclusion that, so long as self-preservation was Heaven's first law, the most certain way of keeping a house free of any one able and willing to pay rent was to appoint a caretaker to look after it. But, before he realized this, myself and a younger brother were sent to spend a portion of our summer holidays in charge of the aforesaid caretaker. She did not trouble her head much about us, and being left mainly to our own devices we wandered about the great metropolis at our own sweet will, all being well so long as we put in an appearance at meal-times. Not being overburdened with cash, we had to limit our sightseeing principally to such exhibitions as the shop-windows and bazaars, varied by visits to the British Museum, the National Gallery, and similar establishments, where no monetary payment

for admission was required. Having, to a great extent, exhausted these, we pined for fresh excitements, and at this juncture an alluring playbill struck us, as it were, full in the eye, and suggested great possibilities.

After a very careful study of programmes, and a most exhaustive discussion as to the respective merits of the various playhouses, we determined to dare fortune, and bestow our patronage upon the Haymarket Theatre. It was before the days of *matinées*, so that it was night or nothing, and we were very well aware that we had no chance of being let out by the caretaker after dusk. So with great craft and subtlety—for which, as the elder, I accept full responsibility—we suggested to the good lady one afternoon that, as it was nice and fine, we should be obliged by her giving us an early cup of tea, so that we could go for a good walk. Up to this point our conscience was clear, because it was strictly true that we were going for a really good walk, in view of the distance we had to traverse, our finances not admitting of vehicles. In blissful ignorance of our baleful intention, she graciously acquiesced in our desire, and, tea being quickly despatched, we set forth. As we could only muster 2*s.* between us, it was Hobson's choice as to seats. In order to ensure admission we arrived at the gallery-door long before the hour of opening, and so secured centre seats in the front row, next to a gentleman in shirt-sleeves, with whom we had some pleasant conversation. The first piece was an old-fashioned operetta, *The Quaker*, the *pièce de résistance* being a three-act comedy, entitled *The Contested Election*, in which Charles Matthews sustained the principal part. It just suited him, for he was a dashing, light-hearted, Parliamentary candidate, who conducted his canvass with overflowing life and spirits, and delivered a hustings-speech in that delightfully effervescent vein of volubility of which he was a master. The programme concluded with a screaming farce, *My Wife's Maid*, in which the ever-volatile one appeared again, and kept us all agog.

We stayed on till the last curtain fell, and then started homewards, shortly before midnight. In those days Primrose Hill was much more in the country than I dare say it

is now, and to reach it, after leaving the streets, we had to traverse a long, unlighted and lonely stretch of road, skirting Regent's Park. But in trustful faith we plodded on, unmindful of anything but the reception which we knew would be awaiting us at our destination. Our anticipations as to this were amply realized, and there was a pretty how-de-do when we appeared. A full report of our goings-on, lacking nothing in the way of descriptiveness which could add to the enormity of our offence, was transmitted home, and an awful wiggling followed, which no doubt we richly deserved. Londoners spoke of our escapade with bated breath, and marvelled that we survived intact. It was carefully impressed upon us that, full as London was of traps for the unwary, we had had a marvellous escape. According to the doctrine of probabilities, we ought to have been caught up by thieves, as *Oliver Twist* was, and subjected to involuntary training, to fit us for burglars. Failing that, it was extraordinary that we were not kidnapped by Epping Forest gipsies, who nightly prowled around the Park precincts, on the look-out to capture for predatory purposes little boys, whom walnut-juice would disguise beyond all recognition. Of course, we were repentant enough not to do it again, but I cannot truthfully avow that we did not think the game worth the candle.

Charles Matthews, until his latter days, had a chronic difficulty in measuring his wants by his means, and was, in consequence, so often in the old Fleet Prison for debt, that it is said that once at a dinner-party his name was coupled with the toast of the Navy, on the ground that he knew more about the fleet than any one else present. The last time I saw and heard him he was discoursing upon his own life and adventures, and in allusion to his impecunious days, he said :

“As long as I paid nobody, I was fairly comfortable, but directly I paid Jones, Brown, who hadn't been paid, was rampant, and that's how I brought trouble on myself.”

Among the audience were many undergraduates who had been in exactly similar case, and I shall never forget the

shout of uproarious appreciation which immediately followed this declaration.

Among my theatrical autographs is a very characteristic epistle from Matthews, addressed to an old friend of my boyhood, long since dead, who was stage-manager at the Lyceum, when it was under the joint management of Matthews and his wife, famous in stage annals as Madame Vestris. My friend had been confiding enough to lend his Chief a £10 note, and this is the airy way in which the borrower delicately hints to the lender that he can depend upon repayment after he has shuffled off this mortal coil :

“MY DEAR SIR,

“I am afraid that you will think I have forgotten your £10 altogether, but the fact is the ‘next engagement’ has never taken place, and we have had a crisis in London instead. Never mind, out of evil cometh good, and the result has been most beneficial to us, and your promised £10 will ultimately revert to you or your heirs or exors.”

The chance of repayment was about as substantial as “the airy fabric of a dream.”

A place of entertainment very popular in my young days, but which has no counterpart now, was Astley's Amphitheatre, in Westminster Road. Here the first part of the programme consisted of equestrian and acrobatic performances in a large arena, and these were succeeded by a play, spectacular in character, enacted on a stage overlooking the aforesaid arena. The pieces played thereon were melodramatic in the extreme, and were either of the *Mazeppa* or *Timour the Tartar* type, or else dramatized representations of deeds of derring-do performed against fearful odds by British sailors or soldiers. When I went—which was in the fifties—the national and patriotic drama was in the ascendant, and, much as I enjoyed the equestrian evolutions of the gauzy-skirted nymphs in the circle, it was the second half of the programme that especially appealed to me. Here the true British sailor, Harry Bluff personified, roused my enthusiasm. I can see him now as he leapt on to the stage, with a cutlass in one hand and a pistol in the other, cutting down one villain, shooting

another, and causing the rest to flee for their lives, just in time to upset their apple-cart and rescue lovely woman in distress. An actor, named Anson, had a considerable reputation as the stage embodiment of the national virtues. He was gifted with a breezy heartiness, a powerful voice, and a certain amount of physical agility; all essential qualifications. He delighted me beyond measure on this occasion by the dash and daring he displayed, and the way in which he always timed himself to arrive at critical moments just when he was most wanted. The audience had plenty for their money, for there was an elaborate pantomime to finish with.

An old actor-manager, one of the kindest of souls, and, to me, most delightful of men, who took me, as a small boy, to many a theatre, was my host on this occasion. After the final fall of the curtain, having started homewards, we were joined by a mild-mannered, quiet-spoken man. As my friend and he appeared to have business matters to discuss, I detached my thoughts from them, having plenty to occupy my mind with what I had seen. When the two had parted, I went into ecstasies of admiration over the sailor and his doings. Then my friend, in a most casual way, observed :

“ You mean the gentleman I was walking with.”

You might, in the phraseology of the period, have knocked me down with a feather, I was so surprised and hurt to think that I had been in such distinguished company without knowing it. I would have given anything to have shaken hands with him, and to have been able to say how much I appreciated all I had seen of him. Alas, I was a victim of one of those lost opportunities, which never recur ! He has long ceased to flourish his cutlass, at any rate, in this sphere, but I never think of Astley's without recalling my poignant regret at what I missed. If any reader doubts the depth of what I felt, I content myself with saying I don't believe he ever was a boy, not a *real* boy, or if he were he has forgotten all about it. Besides, I always was a hero-worshipper, and shall be, I expect, to the end.

I have a memento of Anson among my collection of

theatrical autographs. He was the secretary of the Dramatic, Equestrian and Musical Sick Fund, and he pays a handsome tribute to Benjamin Webster, who was the President of the Fund, in the following letter :

“March 11th, 1859.

“MY DEAR MR. WEBSTER,

“I cannot let this dinner of ours pass over without sending you a few lines, which I know you will respect coming from one, proud to be, like you, energetic in the desire to serve and save our poor Brethren. May God bless you, as I do, in the name of my profession for your affectionate and untiring exertions on their behalf, but more especially accept my warmest thanks for your devotion to the Dramatic, Equestrian and Musical Sick Fund, for the ready and willing assistance you have always rendered it.

“I must ever remain, faithfully and fraternally yours,  
“J. W. ANSON.”

This revelation of another side of his character has enhanced my regard for the succourer of distressed womanhood.

I fancy the earliest theatrical company regularly travelling in the provinces, and which led to the superseding of the more permanent stock-company, in the early sixties, was one that played Boucicault's remarkably successful melodrama, *The Colleen Bawn*. The great scene in it, which practically made the piece, represented a cave, opening on to a Killarney lake. Here the villain, Danny Man, attempts to drown the heroine, Eily O'Connor, and is shot, in mistake for an otter, by Myles na Coppaleen, the hero, who then takes a header from the rocks into the depths of a blue-gauze pool, and rescues the heroine. It was wonderfully thrilling, and when Myles, with Eily in his arms, appeared above the surface, and struggled on to a bit of rock, the audience used to go into ecstasies of enthusiasm. I saw all this in an Assembly Room, temporarily fitted up as a theatre, which had a row of windows along one side of it. I remarked to the manager how realistic the scene was—that, in fact, the cave impressed my imagination so strongly that it not only looked to me quite the

place it ought to be, but that I felt distinctly chilly at the sight of it, and that it gave one an excellent idea of a cavern of the winds, a wonderful testimony to the genius of the scene-painter. The manager said he was very glad to learn this, because it was the very effect he had endeavoured to produce. As I was on intimate terms with him, he told me in strict confidence that, as soon as the auditorium was darkened, with a view to rendering the scene more effective, he sent a man round to open every window in the place. This, in itself, engendered a chilly, creepy condition of mind in the audience, very suitable to the occasion, and an impression that the cold blasts of air they were enjoying, which were quite what one would expect in a cavern overlooking the Killarney lakes, were due to the finely realistic way in which the piece was produced and the scenic artist had done his work.

## CHAPTER XVI

The Bancrofts—Benson—The Little Vic.—Gilbert and Sullivan.

THE comedy stage owes as much to the Bancrofts as the tragedy stage does to Irving. Previous to their advent, modern comedy, especially as it was usually presented, was so full of incongruities and inconsistencies as to be little better than a burlesque of social life. They began by transforming "the dust hole"—as the little Prince of Wales's Theatre, in Tottenham Court Road, was called—into a bijou playhouse, to which the rank and fashion and intellect of the metropolis flocked. A migration to the Haymarket followed, and made up a total term of twenty years of successful management. The "star" system, against which the Bancrofts set their face, and which was then in full vogue, was a deadly foe to appropriateness and accuracy of detail. Under it everything was sacrificed to the leading lights, who were surrounded in the gilded saloons of the aristocracy by representatives of rank and fashion moving uneasily in dress suits, for which it was only too evident they had never been measured. Such scions of the nobility were known under the generic term of "Adelphi Guests," signifying a social type seen nowhere but on the stage. The Bancrofts altered all this, and when they staged a scene saw to it that all was as true to life as money could make it, and that those who peopled it wore their attire and moved in it as though to the manner born. Their discovery of Tom Robertson and their courage in giving him a free hand to work out his daring innovations were rewarded with the success they deserved. He was the very dramatist for their purpose, for he substituted for stale and artificial adaptations plays thoroughly

English in tone, and with just that touch of genuine sentiment which stirs the heart of the honest-minded playgoer. In the mounting of the plays, if a drawing-room were the scene, it was worthy of Mayfair; if a bit of the country-side, it brought the scent of the hay over the foot-lights; whilst who could forget that Crimean hut in *Ours*, and the raging force of the blizzard driving in the snow whenever the door was opened. In Robertson's plots an incident might be improbable, but it sprang so naturally out of its surroundings, was so essentially the outcome of what had preceded it, that it seemed to fall naturally into the general scheme. It was in this respect that Robertson and the Bancrofts combined did so much to alter the old unnatural method, which took as its axiom "look after the actor and the play will look after itself."

Many years ago I witnessed the representation of a piece written to display the versatility of a star actress. Attired in ordinary walking dress—it was in the crinoline period—she was in the leafy glade of a forest in the company of a gentleman at whom she was setting her cap. She had sung to him very prettily, and he then inquired of her if she could dance. She archly said, "You shall see—wait but a moment." She then lightly tripped behind an oak-tree at the wings. The gentleman, no doubt aware that, if he waited long enough, there would be something worth stopping for, delayed his departure, and filled up what would otherwise have been a stage-wait by dilating to the audience upon the lady's beauty and accomplishments. He was not disappointed, for, in an incredibly short space of time, the fair one emerged from behind the oak attired in the full—or, rather, the abbreviated—costume of a professional *coryphée*—satin shoes, pink tights, gauze skirt, and all. She then performed a most elaborate *pas seul*, embellishing it with the most entrancing airs, graces, pirouettes and toe-tippings; a most remarkable feat in the case of a lady, as she was supposed to be, in ordinary society and not a member of the *corps de ballet*. It need hardly be said that the gentleman was not proof against such a fascination as this and surrendered unreservedly, no doubt feeling that, apart from her terpsichorean talent, any one

who was so great a mistress of resource as to be able at a moment's notice to find all she wanted, in the matter of a fresh costume, behind an oak tree would be pre-eminently fitted to preside over his domestic hearth. Besides, her genius for quick change was some assurance that he would not be kept waiting, as husbands not infrequently are, for an interminable time, whilst a wife just runs upstairs to put her hat on. As for the audience, they had to imagine that the wood was not a frequented spot, and that it was just the right weather for changing garments in the open air.

This was by no means an exceptional instance of how audiences were expected to lose sight of everything except the necessity of giving "the star" the fullest possible opportunity for displaying his or her accomplishments. The Prince of Wales's Theatre, by accustoming the public to what was much more in accordance with common sense, did much to improve the taste of playgoers in this respect.

To no representative of the Stage have provincial cities owed more than they have to Sir Frank Benson. Year after year he has made his tour, and, whether as actor or manager, has fully earned, by the intellectuality of his efforts, the gratitude both of the playgoer and the man of letters. It is not too much to say that no one has done more to bring Shakespeare to the homes of the people, or has treated the creations of the poet in a more scholarly or reverent spirit. For nearly thirty years, amid some difficulties and discouragements, he has followed out his high ideal. This has resulted in a series of representations, which, while appealing to the advanced taste of the most cultured and critical, has, by the histrionic ability of the actors and the worthiness of the setting, attracted also the ordinary playgoer. While Irving was popularizing Shakespeare in town, Benson was doing the same for the country, each bringing to bear a scholarly understanding of the great dramatist's intentions and a judicious appreciation of, and a sincere enthusiasm for, all that they represented. But this is not the whole of our indebtedness, for from the practical school provided by Benson's companies have gone forth many of its members, who, imbued with the best

traditions of the Stage, have become leading exponents of the classic Drama in some of the principal theatres of the English-speaking world. Well earned, indeed, then was the State recognition of one who has done so much to uphold the dignity of his profession and to elevate the taste of the people. The only wonder is that the honour was so long in coming.

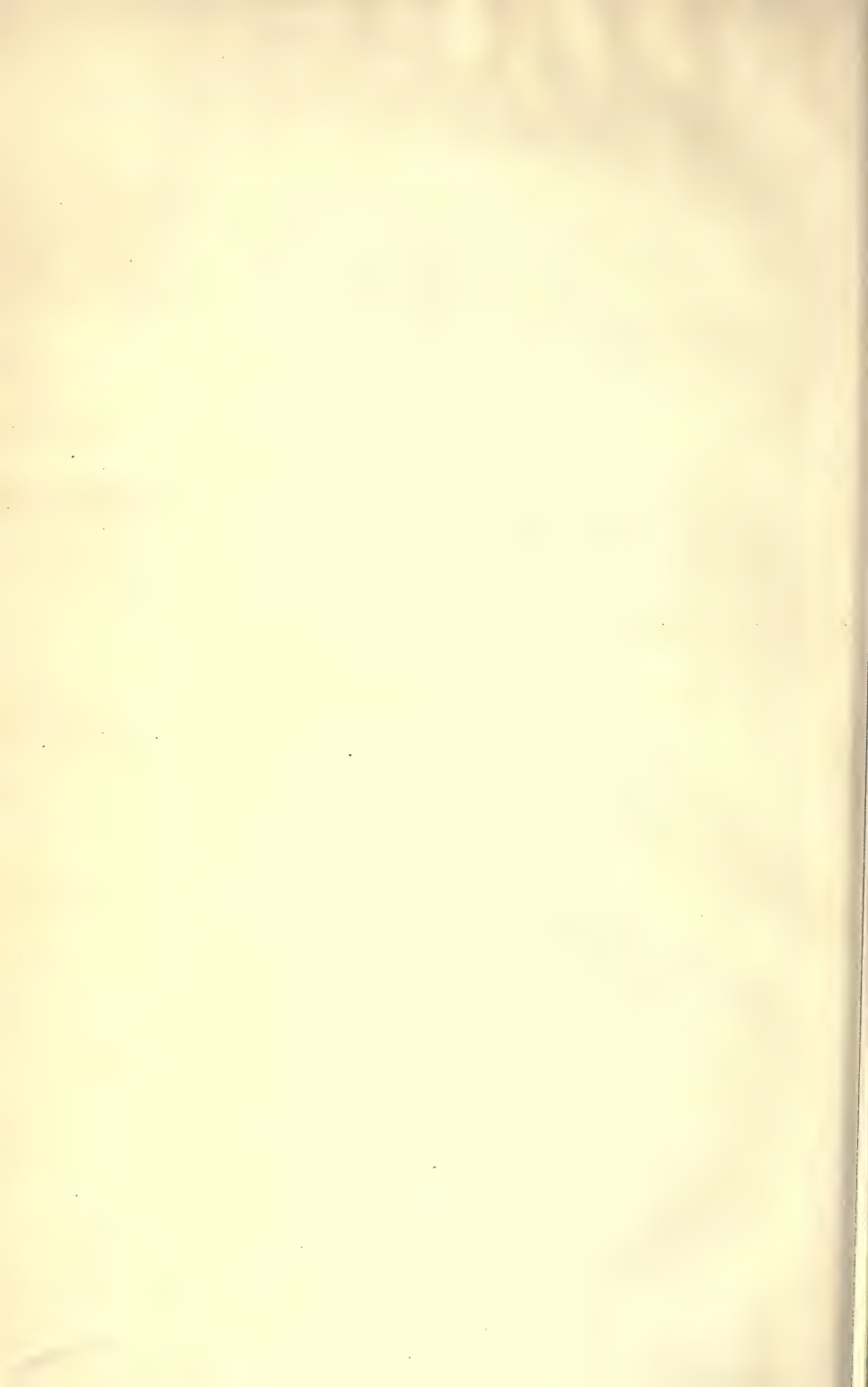
Benson's upbringing and classical training were a good preparation for the work to which he put his hand. As most people know, Benson was a scholar of Balliol College, Oxford, under Jowett's regime, and it was during the time of his studies there that he made his debut as an actor. The performance at which he did so was not only notable as furnishing a strong incentive to the adoption of his future career, but also as leading to a reconsideration, by the University in general, of the embargo hitherto placed upon the Drama at Oxford. Previously, the powers-that-be would not license a theatre in term-time, nor countenance amateur performances by members of the University at any time. The Master of Balliol was much more of a modern than his brother dons, and much broader than most of them in his views, theological and otherwise. So when, in 1880, he was asked by Benson and others to sanction a performance of the *Agamemnon* of Æschylus by junior members of the University, he not only acceded to this but granted the use of the College hall for the purpose, and threw over the performance the ægis of his authority. Many well-regulated dignitaries were aghast at this, and rivalled Cassandra herself in prophetic utterances as to the effect such a departure from precedent would have upon University discipline, etc. Soon Balliol "quad" teemed with consignments of scenery being carted to the hall, whence issued weird sounds of a chorus in the throes of rehearsal. Such mundane sights and sounds were, indeed, strangely at variance with hallowed traditions, and if those who dreaded these innovations had realized what they were destined to lead to they would have held up their hands still higher in horror.

At that time, as the representative of a London daily paper, I wrote a report of the performance in question,

MASTER J. IN HIS FIRST YEAR  
FROM AN OLD PRINTING.



AN OXFORD CARICATURE OF PROF. JOWETT FROM BABYHOOD ONWARDS  
Reproduced by permission of Mr. H. Giles, from a pen-and-ink sketch by F. L. Hill



which accounts for my knowing more about it than I otherwise should. The cast, viewed in the light of after events, was a notable one, for it included not only Benson as Clytemnestra, but W. L. Courtney as the Watchman, the Hon. J. N. Bruce as Agamemnon, A. C. Bradley as the leader of the chorus, and C. A. Spring Rice as a slave. All these not only distinguished themselves at the University, but afterwards occupied important positions in the world either of letters or diplomacy; possibly this may be said of others of the *dramatis personæ*, but I can only vouch for those I have named. Burne-Jones and Professor Richmond helped in the designing of the scenery and costumes, and Parratt—now Sir Walter and Master of the King's Music—composed the chorus music, whilst J. R.—now Sir Rennell—Rodd, the distinguished diplomatist and poet, lent a hand generally. The representation was a great success, as well it might be with a company so imbued with the true classical spirit.

All the parts were admirably sustained, but, as a brother critic phrased it, "Benson's Clytemnestra stood out as the queen of the evening." It was a most powerful embodiment of stern, unbending justice, and, after he had seen it, Irving said to Benson, "If you have not already determined upon a profession, why not try the stage?" The performance attracted many scholars and others, including "the little Master" himself and Browning the poet. As no harm came of this daring experiment, the authorities took heart of grace and sanctioned the formation of a University Amateur Dramatic Society for the representation of Shakespeare and the classic Drama. Dean Liddell, one of the progressive school in this respect, when he became Vice-Chancellor, went still further, taking the bull by the horns and boldly licensing, under proper restrictions, professional as well as amateur performances in full term. This resulted in the erection of a handsome theatre, and Jowett, who at the time was Vice-Chancellor, in order to give it a good start, attended, with the Mayor, the opening performance by the Society above referred to. *Twelfth Night* was played, and the programme now before me shows that, included in the cast, among others who

afterwards became notabilities, were Arthur Bouchier, the well-known actor-manager, Coningsby Disraeli, M.P., and the Hon. J. G. Adderley, ecclesiastic and litterateur. In other of the Society's programmes appear the names of Lord Curzon, the present Archbishop of York, and H. B. Irving. Of course, all those named were members of the University at the time.

It may be interesting to recall the sort of evening's entertainment provided for the recreation of the undergraduate mind before Jowett and Liddell awoke to the necessity of a change.

There was at that time a ramshackle wooden building, which, under the name of the Victoria Theatre, was licensed in vacation for dramatic performances. The University authorities, however, would not, for the sake of undergraduate morals, tolerate a theatre in term time, and so it could not then be opened for the acting of stage plays. But the lessee was equal to the emergency, and, as soon as term came round, he periodically rechristened the edifice under his control, and "The Little Vic.," as it was affectionately termed, straightway assumed an air of virtuous respectability, outwardly, under the style and title of "The Victoria Concert Room." Then the lessee straightway betook himself to the Vice-Chancellor and humbly craved permission to give a series of high-class concerts. Vocalists, leading or otherwise, did not in those days come within a Vice-Chancellor's sphere of observation, and therefore that official was not in a position to discriminate between Signor Mario, of Her Majesty's Opera, and the Great Bounce, of the Frivolity Music Hall. To the official mind, music was music all the world over, and, as undergraduates could not be everlastingly at their books, "a quiet evening with a little music" seemed perhaps as harmless a form of dissipation as any. The lessee, therefore, got what he wanted, and went on his way rejoicing. He did not press the Vice-Chancellor to honour the high-class concert with his august presence, and he would have been terribly dismayed had that dignitary expressed his intention of doing so. And why? Because his so-called "high-class concert" was simply a third-class music-hall

entertainment of the most pronounced type. I speak from experience, for "I have been there," although I cannot say "I still would go." The place used to be filled with undergraduates, and, as non-smokers were conspicuous by their absence, the performers could only be discerned through a thick veil of tobacco smoke. The songs were—well, not exactly drawing-room ballads; and the singers were—well, not just what we are accustomed to at the Queen's Hall. The latter were, however, quite good enough for their audience, with whom they were soon on a footing of extreme familiarity. Their hearers shouted their criticisms across the footlights, and the fire was promptly returned. The audience supplied the chorus of every song, and if, as in the case of a sentimental ballad, the composer had not provided one the omission was soon rectified.

Anything more free and easy in the way of entertainments and more unlike a "high-class concert" it would be difficult to imagine. Sometimes a general *mêlée* brought the proceedings to an abrupt conclusion, and occasionally there was an intermingling on the stage of the audience and the performers. But the authorities were perfectly happy in the blissful consciousness that the young gentlemen under their charge were having a nice, quiet, soul-satisfying time which would refresh and reinvigorate their minds for the studies of to-morrow. All the time the proctors, with their "bulldogs," were busy perambulating the streets with a view to seeing that no undergraduate was getting into mischief there, or had ventured out without his academics, while the occupants of "The Little Vic." were left to their own devices. I do not mean to convey that there was any particular harm in these entertainments beyond what was apparent on the surface and the encouragement they offered to rowdiness in general, but there was a singular inconsistency in refusing to allow theatrical performances, which could be controlled and regulated, whilst permitting a very inferior class of entertainment without taking any practical steps to ascertain its real nature.

The foregoing is an absolutely faithful picture, drawn from personal observation, of a Varsity night out. Hence

it is scarcely surprising that when the Vice-Chancellors, more up-to-date and with a more intimate acquaintance with the wiles and subtleties of a world outside collegiate walls than were the dons of an older generation, appeared upon the scene, these "high-class concerts" came to an end and Ichabod was written over the portals of "The Little Vic."

If, as has been pointed out, the stage of tragedy and comedy owes much to Irving, Benson, and the Bancrofts, the musical stage is not the less indebted to Gilbert and Sullivan. Their operas afford an apt illustration of "the survival of the fittest." Fashions in plays are as fluctuating and as evanescent as fashions in dress, and, with regard to both, the public taste changes many times in the course of a single generation. But the public has not yet forsworn its attachment to these operas, and shows no signs of doing so, for there must be very few nights in the year when they are not being played somewhere within the area of the British dominions. The very recollection of the subjects they satirize is mainly kept alive, in many instances, by the melodious wit which directed the shaft.

How is it that Gilbert and Sullivan Operas still go merrily on for years after their original production, whilst all other pieces of a similar character—so far as they are compounded of music and dialogue—when once they have had their little day are seldom heard of more? The reason is not far to seek. In the first place, there was a remarkable conjunction of two men, each of whom was supreme in his particular sphere. But, under the ordinary conditions of dramatic production, this would not have ensured longevity for their efforts. Associated with this class of piece are certain fine old crusted traditions which no theatrical manager of the ordinary type could possibly be induced to forego, but which would have been fatal to Gilbert and Sullivan Opera. By a happy stroke of luck, the one essential to success was found in the person of the late Mr. D'Oyly Carte, who was willing to provide the theatre and the capital necessary for the mounting of the operas, and also ready to run the risk of giving both author and composer an absolutely free hand in the staging

and production of their own work. On the stage they were vested with absolute autocracy, whether as regards the company, whom they themselves selected, the scenery, the dresses, the accessories, or the general management; in fact, they were free of all hindrance or dictation from any one. All the world knows how completely the result justified this confidence, and to it we owe, conjointly with the inspirations of two geniuses, that long and delightful series of plays which captured and have retained all these years the favour of the theatre-going public.

It is safe to say that no two individuals in this or any other country have ever done more, or as much, for the promotion of what, in the words of one of them, may be aptly described as "innocent merriment," joined with perfection of verbal and musical expression. Every one of their efforts is characterized by a polished wit, a brilliant and refined humour, absolutely void of offence, a consistent story, and music which has become classic in its charm, its melodiousness, and its fitness for its purpose. Men who have added so much to the sum of human happiness as this represents are entitled to be remembered as no ordinary benefactors of the human race. We owe them much, too, for the irreproachable means they employed to attain their ends, for the comedian who relied upon "gag" and buffoonery for his effects had no place upon their stage. How often one reads in dramatic criticisms of first-night performances of the musical comedies or revues of to-day that "Mr. So-and-so, when he has had time to work up and supplement the materials allotted to him, will, no doubt, make a great success of his part." If he acts upon this, as he generally does, it is equivalent to saying that whoever has the whip-hand of the author has given the actor carte blanche to introduce as much of his own tomfoolery as he thinks the audience will stand. There was no go-as-you-please latitude of this sort under the Gilbert and Sullivan regime, for the penalties for the slightest deviation, in word or action, from the original text, were, and are, too serious to be disregarded. As the piece was played the first night, so was it played to the end of the run; hence all the old traditions attaching to it are preserved and handed on,

for they are as rigorously adhered to now as in the first instance. The original intentions of both author and composer have been faithfully observed, and the public has reciprocated this by its own faithfulness over a long series of years. I speak feelingly, for I have seen every one of the Operas, and most of them many times.

I have two pleasant personal memories of Sullivan. In 1854, Sir Frederick Gore Ouseley, afterwards Professor of Music at Oxford, in succession to Sir Henry Bishop, proceeded to his degree of Doctor of Music, and, in accordance with custom, composed an exercise for public performance. It was in the form of an oratorio, the subject being "The Martyrdom of St. Polycarp." As I delighted in music, I was taken to the performance, the scene of which was the Sheldonian Theatre, where all important University functions are held. The Vice-Chancellor, surrounded by the heads of houses and professors, presided, and the spacious building, ground-floor and galleries, was packed with an audience which filled every nook and corner of it, for what was already known of the composer raised great expectations. Beyond this, the work was to be heard under especially favourable conditions, for Sir Frederick, being a man of means, had spared no expense to secure an adequate rendering. The instrumentalists came from the best London orchestras, while the soloists included Miss Dolby, the eminent contralto, W. H. Cummings as the tenor, and Weiss, the fine bass singer. Two features of the performance roused the audience to great enthusiasm. One was the March of the Priests of Dagon, and the other was a trio of Angels, exquisitely sung by three little chorister-boys from the Chapel Royal. The effect of both these upon the audience was electrical, and nothing less than a repetition of each would satisfy them. I well recollect the heart-stirring spirit of the march and the beauty and pathos of the trio. One of the little choristers was Arthur Sullivan. I little thought then that I was listening to one who, in after years, would be one of England's greatest composers, and who would do me the honour to write a song for one of my plays, about which I may be able to say something later on. The Rev. Thomas Helmore, "Master of the Children,"

said Sullivan's voice "is very sweet, and his style of singing far more sympathetic than that of most boys.'

Sir Frederick's composition more than fulfilled all that had been expected of it, and an outburst of enthusiasm greeted him at its conclusion. Then came a very remarkable and unexpected incident. The soloists had left the platform, and the band were busy packing up their instruments, when a great demand arose for the National Anthem. The Crimean War was raging, and patriotism was at a high pitch. The shouts for "God save the Queen" arose on all sides, and with a force and volume very difficult to be resisted. Sir Frederick determined that the wish must be complied with, so the band were called upon to unpack their instruments, and Miss Dolby was hurriedly summoned back to the orchestra to sing the solo part. To a child's mind it was a great scene, when the whole of the vast audience rose and joined heart and soul in the National Anthem, and then cheer upon cheer followed at the mention of the Queen's name. It is harking back a long way, but the impression of it all went down so deep into my memory, that it is still fresh after this lapse of time. Years afterwards I saw Sullivan receive the degree of Doctor of Music, *honoris causa*, conferred by the Vice-Chancellor, on behalf of the University, in the Sheldonian Theatre, with universal acclaim. In the midst of it, the undergraduates lowered from their gallery a gigantic pinafore, and added an appropriate operatic chorus.

## CHAPTER XVII

The Amateur Stage—My First Appearance—Peter, the Page—A Bolt from the Blue—A Piebald Tragedian.

**O**F the doings of the amateur stage I can speak with some confidence, having, in my younger days, had a long and varied experience of it, for, at one time and another, I filled every possible office—from prompter to general manager—in connection with it except that of call-boy, and no doubt I should have served in that capacity as well had not the companies to which I attached myself considered that some one to remind them to come up to time was a superfluity. On the stage itself, during a somewhat lengthened association with it, I played in tragedy, comedy, farce and burlesque, with singing and dancing thrown in when necessary. I was far from a success to begin with; in fact, I failed so ignominiously at the start, through circumstances over which I had no control, and even after that, for a time, made such a poor show that I have often wondered since why in the world I didn't throw up the sponge at the second attempt. That I kept on is some testimony to my pertinacity and also my devotion to the cause.

I was a very small boy when I first “trod the boards,” which formed the flooring of a loft over a stable. The performance was the result of a cherished ambition on the part of the head-boy of the school I was at to play *Macbeth* with himself as the Thane. So he organized a representation of the great tragedy, and cast me—heaven only knows why!—for the part of Macduff. We supplied our own dresses and painted our own scenery, so the general effect can be better imagined than described. I cannot remember how the play ran its course previous to the crowning incident being reached, but that one incident and that only

stands out still in my mind with terrible distinctness, submerging all else that happened that night. We had arrived at that thrilling situation when Macbeth has to meet Macduff in deadly combat. I had just put myself into an attitude to fulfil my foe's injunction to "lay on," and he had followed it up by anathematizing the one who first cried "Hold, enough!" when a female voice in excited tones made night hideous with "Master Tom, come home at once! How dare you be out so late!" and the domestic whose voice it was followed this up by possessing herself of my person. The performance having been unduly prolonged, my mother, who had a will of her own, had despatched her emissary charged to bring me home at once at all costs. So I never had the satisfaction of giving Macbeth his quietus, whilst he was left lamenting the absence of his intended slayer. The worst of it all was that our fellow-students, who had paid twopence a-piece to witness the performance, declared that, the avenging spirit having failed to fulfil the author's intention, they had been defrauded, as the sight of that act of retributive justice was the one inducement with them to part with their coins. As the audience largely outnumbered the theatrical company, discretion was felt to be the better part of valour; hence a reluctant disgorging of coppers followed. I realized the ignominy of my own position acutely, and gave vent accordingly on reaching home. This was my first and last appearance in tragedy.

I felt that, dramatically, I was under a cloud, and I made no further stage appearance at that particular seminary. At a larger and more important school to which I was sent later on, theatricals flourished, and performances for charity were given annually in public. Notwithstanding my previous discomfiture, I was too ardent a spirit to refrain from taking part, but, not having yet found my feet, I was, histrionically, a distinct failure. I had all but lost heart when I was cast for a part mainly because, on account of its apparent insignificance, nobody else wanted it. It was just one of those parts which, like Lord Dunderbary, in *Our American Cousin*, might be anything or nothing. It was merely a page boy, who, with a sense of

his own importance, was always standing up for his rights with his superiors and arguing on social inequalities with the parlourmaid. Somehow or other, when I had grasped the idea, I felt I actually *was* that page boy. I entered into all his feelings when he was snubbed, and revelled in his triumphs when he gave a Roland for an Oliver. I knew exactly how he lived, moved and had his being, and the disabilities under which he laboured. The more I was in his company, the more I elaborated him and his characteristics in every direction by means of daring interpellations, though saving myself from the wrath of the other *dramatis personæ* by always giving them their cue before I had done.

I was nervous enough as I wondered whether I should have sufficient assurance to carry through successfully in public all I had worked out on the quiet. But when, on the eventful night, I found myself facing the footlights, I forgot all about the audience and everything else except that I was the cocky little page boy trying to hold his own with his betters. The roar which followed my first exit was such an encouragement as sent me full speed ahead, and I spread myself out accordingly. Then, as the curtain went down, and there was one uproarious shout for the page boy, I felt, with delirious joy, that I had come to my own at last. For ever afterwards, so long as I remained on the amateur stage, no matter what company I was in, I could always count upon first choice of any comedy part which I considered to be within my scope. By the blessing of Providence, I have had other successes in life, but never one that filled me with more real bliss than this. I was, up to that time, a rather timid, sensitive boy, who wanted some encouragement, having been disheartened by failure. This little success, so trumpery as it must seem to grown-ups who have never gone through a similar experience, did me a world of good, for it was a tonic when I most needed it, bringing home to me that, after all, I was not such a fool as I thought I was. Neither boy nor man will ever do much if he lacks confidence in himself, for a reasonable amount of that commodity is an essential condition in the acquisition of other people's confidence. So if I have been able to hold my own to any extent since that

time, I feel I owe something to the impetus given me by Peter, the page boy.

I am not going to inflict upon long-suffering readers a detailed account of my own personal experiences of the amateur stage, but in connection therewith I will not withhold a mention of two of the drollest incidents, neither of which has ever before seen print, that ever came within my own sphere of knowledge. As general utility man of a company I was acting as prompter, during the first performance of a little drama by Planché, entitled *Charles XII.*, who, as I dare say everybody knows, was King of Sweden. He was a stern, inflexible individual, whose sense of fear was an unknown quantity. In the most important scene in the play he is seated in the room of a house, when a battle is raging just outside of it, dictating letters to one of his officers. The roaring of cannon in close proximity renders the officer tremulous with fright, which he daren't make too evident, as the King, being dead to all such feelings, does not permit a display of them in others. At length a bombshell drops on to the stage and explodes in front of them. The unimpassioned monarch doesn't turn a hair at this, but his amanuensis, being only an ordinary mortal, jumps about like a parched pea, while Charles, with a lofty disdain of the explosive, in a tone of unnatural calm, wants to know why the — the timid one does not get on with the letter. When the scene is properly worked this beautiful instance of courageous self-possession can always be relied upon to bring down the house. We were very anxious to secure this result, so we compounded a combustible warranted to fizz like a glorified squib and explode like a high-pressure cracker. In view of its capabilities, those responsible for the launching of this fearsome engine of war promised Charles and his scribe that it should be dropped well away from them, as no one desired to put the courage of even the King to too severe a test.

At the auspicious moment I signalled to the property man to discharge his bolt, and away it went, but, in his extreme anxiety to spare the nerves of the dramatis personæ, he hurled the deadly explosive so near the

boundary-line separating the stage from the auditorium that the impulsive force of the first bang sent it, to our horror, clean over the footlights into the orchestra. Having arrived in this confined space, it made the most of itself by utilizing its component parts to the full; in fact, no modern shell fresh from a munitions factory could have displayed a more conscientious desire to fulfil all that was expected of it, for it fizzed, it spluttered, it crackled, and it banged by turns. I am not sufficiently a master of graphic description to do justice to its effect upon the panic-stricken band, who were entirely unprepared for the sudden advent in their midst of what for all they knew might be fatal in its effects. Suffice it to say, they did not emulate the phlegmatic imperturbability of Charles. Self-preservation being as much a law to a fiddler, or any other instrumentalist, as to the ordinary man, all, with one accord, made a precipitate rush for the one small available exit-hole, which was speedily blocked. Happily, the life of even an amateur bombshell is of but short duration, and, with a final splutter, it gracefully expired, without inflicting any more serious damage upon those in whose company it found itself than was represented by some temporarily shattered nerves.

After the uproar was over, the orchestra, having received assurances that there were no further surprises of the same sort in store for them, resumed their seats, and no more explosions occurred until the curtain fell, and then they were of a verbal character; the language indulged in behind the scenes by the aggrieved bandsmen being anything but "a concord of sweet sounds," but the audience were heard to declare that they would not have exchanged the exciting drama of "The Bomb in the Band Box" for all the rest of the programme put together.

I had no hand, even indirectly, in the contretemps which forms the subject of my next story. In my very young days I used to attend the performances of an amateur dramatic society, which more closely approximated to that most notable of companies of which Quince, Snug, Bottom and Co., were bright particular stars than any other I ever heard of. I may say at once that I was not a member

of it, being well content to be one of the audience. The performers were all small traders and artisans in days when, education not being so advanced as at present, such trifling elocutionary details as the absence, when wanted, or the presence, when it wasn't, of the aspirate was not regarded as of any particular moment, so long as you made yourself understood. The ambitions of the performers ran high, and on the night to which my story refers they were producing *Othello*. The title-rôle was sustained by, in the ordinary affairs of life, a very harmless individual with whom I had a nodding acquaintance. He was tall, gaunt and ungainly in build, with a countenance of the type best described as "once seen, never forgotten," and the only hallucination I ever found in him lay in his conviction that he was a born tragedian. Under the impression that the Moor of Venice was a full-blooded African nigger of the Christy Minstrel type, he made himself up accordingly, with one rather important omission. When he strode on to the stage to address the Ducal Council it was perceived that, although his countenance was, in Yankee phraseology, so black that "charcoal made a white mark on it," in his excitement he had quite forgotten to see that his hands corresponded in hue, and, being all very fine and large, they were particularly obtrusive in their natural state. Although the audience very audibly tittered, all might have been well had not one of them thought that it would be only friendly to draw the actor's attention to what could be easily rectified. So, in a kindly voice, he called out :

"Bill, you ain't blacked yer 'ands."

Then, and not till then, did the tragedian realize his little oversight. Instead, however, of being grateful for the information vouchsafed, the discovery and the publicity given to it roused in him such a paroxysm of rage that, forgetting all about his love affairs, he strode straight down to the footlights, and, shaking his fist at the speaker, launched at him, in accents hoarse with passion, this terrible threat :

"You say another word about my 'ands and I'll pretty soon come down and black your eyes."

This was quite sufficient to induce the gentleman referred to to refrain from any further observations, as he had no desire to have the absence of black in one case made amends for by an excess of it in another. The audience did not exercise the same self-restraint when enjoying this unexpected addition to the author's text, and roared their appreciation of the situation in a way which detracted somewhat from the impressiveness of the Moor's address to the Senate. At the first opportunity, Othello, having simmered down, repaired his little omission, and the audience resumed their normal tranquillity and their interest in the tragedy. From my knowledge of the hero of the incident, I feel quite sure that he would far rather have emulated the conscientiousness of the actor who blacked himself all over for the part than have erred on the side of doing too little in the matter of colouring. But we are none of us infallible, and even Jove nods sometimes.

## CHAPTER XVIII

Play-writing—How I sold my Piece and got to London—The Reading—Rehearsals—The Night—Some Curious Experiences—The Regeneration of Pantomime—The Stage and its Mission.

“**H**OW can I get my play produced?” is a question often asked by aspiring but unknown playwrights. There is a prevailing impression, not entirely destitute of foundation, that the despatch of your MS. to a theatrical manager generally results, after some lapse of time, in a polite expression of regret that there is “no opening for it at present.” If, however, the Fates desire to sport with you, you may receive a more encouraging but less definite answer.

This is too often, although not always, the net result of an expenditure of no little time and trouble, and the consumption of much midnight oil, or its equivalent. Having been through the mill, with a more encouraging result, my experiences may, perhaps, be helpful to others with similar ambitions.

Although it is not always sufficiently realized, the first necessity of a budding dramatist is a knowledge of stage-craft. The celestial fire is not absolutely essential to success, but some acquaintance with the technique of the Stage certainly is. Having been from my earliest youth a devotee of the Drama, I became an enrolled member of an amateur theatrical company long before I was out of my teens, and I do not know a better way of learning the rudiments of the craft than acting one's self. After gaining experience in this direction, I tried my 'prentice hand at adaptation. The company to which I belonged were anxious to play a particular piece, but, as it did not afford sufficient scope for the display of such histrionic powers as we thought we possessed, I undertook—without the

permission of the author—to supply this deficiency. I will frankly admit that, in the doing of it, I took such unwarrantable liberties with the text that, by the time I had finished with it, I was not at all sure that its legitimate parent would have recognized his own offspring. However, as the object in view was successfully attained, it was generally conceded by those most interested that the end justified the means.

This so far encouraged me that I conceived the daring idea of writing a piece specially calculated to display the capabilities of the shining lights of our theatrical firmament. I never laid the flattering unction to my soul that the higher walks of the Drama were within my reach. I realized early enough how far my wings would carry me, and I had no desire to share the fate of Icarus. I was content to woo the smiles, rather than the admiration of, the gods—in the gallery and elsewhere. Those were the palmy days of extravaganza and burlesque. As I could rhyme a bit, and had a turn for parody, I thought that I could not do better than follow the fashion and my own bent at one and the same time. Hence my first original effort was “a piece of Oxford extravagance,” as the programme styled it, under the title of “Acis and Galatea : or the Beau ! the Belle !! and the Blacksmith !!!” It was first played on the stage of the Oxford Theatre. I need not say more about the performance than that the reception was all that a young and previously untried author could desire, and that it helped to bring a goodly sum to the charity which was supposed to justify its production.

“With all my blushing honours thick upon me,” I was not content with being the creator of a play with a past only, and so began to take thought for its future. The Mecca of author and actor alike is the great metropolis, but having none of that theatrical influence which is generally supposed to count for so much and, in practice, is found to be worth so little, I had to start my play on its round of visits to such dramatic establishments as might be likely to afford it hospitality without any inner-circle introduction. It was civilly received, but when staging

it was suggested, managers all, "with one accord, began to make excuse." At last, in despair, I wrote to Thomas Hailes Lacy, then the one and only theatrical bookseller and publisher, whose little shop disappeared when the Strand was widened, enclosing a copy of the piece, and asking him what he would give me for it. He responded by asking me what I would take for it. I replied, "Five pounds," and he promptly closed with the offer. As I fixed my own price I had no cause for complaint, and, as the piece became an established favourite with amateurs who remitted fees for the privilege of playing it, I had no reason to believe that the purchaser had cause to repent his bargain.

Nothing further accrued from the transaction, so far as I was concerned, until some time afterwards, when, to my astonishment, I received a letter from Miss Marie Litton, of the Royal Court Theatre, London, inquiring my terms for writing a piece specially for production at her theatre, and for which she would provide a first-rate cast. Her theatre was not one of those with which I had previously communicated, as it was not playing what I thought I could supply. Miss Litton, who had not very long previously acquired the theatre of which she was proprietor and manager, was endeavouring to attract to it the fashionables of the town by means of good-class pieces, staged with much elegance and taste; she herself had a reputation as a light-comedy actress of considerable charm. With a view to living up to the theatre's title, all the male attendants were attired in Court-costume, knee-breeches, silk stockings, etc., and the general surroundings and equipments of the establishment were in accord with this.

On receipt of the letter referred to, I appointed to meet the lady at her theatre, when she unfolded to me what she had in her mind, and it was to the following effect: at Drury Lane, then under Chatterton's management, there had just been produced a grand romantic and spectacular drama by Andrew Halliday, founded upon Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe*, and entitled *Rebecca*; the chief stars in the cast being Phelps, as Isaac of York, and the lovely Adelaide Neilson, as Rebecca. Playgoers were flocking to

this, and so she proposed that I should furnish her with a burlesque-extravaganza on the same theme, especially parodying the scenes, situations and general treatment of the subject in the Drury Lane version, and having particular regard to the methods and mannerisms of the performers. The principals for whom she wished me to write parts commensurate with their talents were Patty Oliver, a very popular comedy actress and the original Black-eyed Susan of Burnand's celebrated burlesque; Nellie Bromley, a stage beauty, and the original Dolly Mayflower in the aforesaid burlesque; Kate Bishop, a very graceful "first boy" and a good singer and dancer; Alfred Bishop, her brother, a very clever light-comedy actor; and Edward Righton, the original Boombleshardt in Gilbert's *Creatures of Impulse*, and the best impersonator of a Jew on the stage at that time. Others, who were to have minor speaking parts, were to be well qualified for what they had to do, and those whose main rôle was to illustrate the poetry of motion were, at the same time, to be shining examples of physical beauty.

I may say here that Miss Litton was not only as good as her word in the cast she promised me, but afterwards added to the attractions by engaging Cornélie D'Anka, a vocalist who was very much the vogue just then, and who had both a fine voice and a fine presence, and by commissioning Arthur Sullivan to compose a song specially for the piece. This resulted in his giving the world his beautiful "Looking Back" and myself the opportunity of making the acquaintance of the composer, whose personality appealed to me as strongly as it did to every one who was similarly privileged.

My patroness made only three conditions with me: that I should compress the leading incidents of the novel, and especially of the Drury Lane version of it, into three fairly long scenes; that the piece should play not less than an hour; and that it should be delivered complete and ready for rehearsal within a month from that date. The author's fees were to be three pounds a week, the copyright reverting to him after the run at the Court. Authors were not paid in those days as they are now, and, as these terms

were better than either Tom Robertson or Burnand got for their first pieces, I could not complain.

The most astonishing thing to me was that any one should risk the reputation of their theatre and such a company, together with the large amount of capital involved, upon the mere chance of the production of an unknown writer turning out trumps. It seemed to me so much like commissioning a country-side tailor to fit town dandies of the first water with garments commensurate with their ability to wear them. The only thing I shied at was the time-limit, inasmuch as my ordinary engagements would only allow of play-writing as a recreation when the necessary day's work was done. But I did not allow this to stand in the way of my accepting the commission.

Curiously enough, up to a few weeks of this time I had never read Scott's *Ivanhoe*. Then something prompted me to make amends for this deficiency, and so, on going for a short holiday, I took a copy of the novel with me and diligently perused it. This saved me some time and trouble when, all in a hurry, I had to deal with the subject.

Some time after our first interview, I asked my patroness how in the world she ever came to hear of me, and to trust me to the extent she had, and she explained the mystery as follows :

"One day I had occasion to call at Lacy's, and, before I left, the old gentleman handed me your *Acis and Galatea*, with the suggestion that I should produce it. I took it home, read it, and thought it so good that I determined to ask you to write a piece specially for me. So I shall have the pleasure of paying the author's fees to you instead of to Lacy."

This brought home to me the advantage to an unknown author of having his piece printed ; for Lacy had included it in his acting edition of plays. Speaking generally, a play in MS. by a beginner stands a poor chance with managers, whereas print appeals to them as being much more readable. So my advice is—have your play printed, at somebody else's expense, as I did, if possible ; if not, at your own cost, but take care to enter it at Stationers'

Hall first. Of course, when a piece is bespoken, it is for the management to print it or not, as they see fit. In my case, they elected to do so, and did very well out of the sale of copies.

Having fully committed myself to the undertaking, the next thing was to see the piece and the people whom I had to misrepresent. So I hied me to Drury Lane and spent two nights watching, with my eyes and ears at full stretch, all that transpired on that vast stage, absorbing everything I could in the time. Then I gave my mind to the music, and this brought me into very pleasant relationship with Alfred Cellier, the Musical Director of the Court. I relied mainly upon national and operatic melodies with a few popular tunes of the day thrown in, and these he arranged, also supplying some original incidental music. In rewriting the songs, I parodied the original words as far as possible whilst adapting them to the incidents of the plot. In accordance with the fashion of the time, the whole of the dialogue was in rhyme, and plentifully garnished with puns and topical allusions.

I came up to time with the piece, upon which I bestowed the title of *Isaac of York : or Normans and Saxons at Home*. Then followed that most trying of ordeals—even to the seasoned playwright, let alone such a callow chirper as I was—the reading of the play to the assembled company who had to tackle it. If the play is a tragedy, I dare say it is all right, because the atmosphere and surroundings are in thorough accord with it. But the author who has to sit down in cold blood and attempt to do justice to a series of jocularities is entitled to all the pity the gods have to bestow. A theatre in the daytime, when no performance is on, is not the most exhilarating spot in the world under any circumstances, and when, as in this instance, the bare, unfurnished stage is the scene of the function, the depression is complete. I sat at the head of a long table, with those destined to speak my words solemnly disposed on either side. Amid a deathly stillness, I plodded through my task, thinking how flat my most cherished jokes sounded, and how hollow my mock-heroics fell upon the ear. In the light of fuller experience I can quite enter

into the feelings of my listeners. They were very much in the position of expectant beneficiaries at the reading of a will, their whole attention being concentrated upon discovering whether or not the author had made adequate provision for their needs, otherwise their talents; until this was cleared up, there could be no room for emotion of any sort.

At last I was approaching the end of my penance, when, just as I was about to read the last appealing couplets, there was a unanimous cry for me to desist. Then I was informed that, under no circumstances, must "the tag" be heard until the actual night of production, unless one desired to seal the fate of a piece by anticipation.

I need hardly say that wild horses could not have dragged the tag out of me after that.

The profession have almost as many superstitions as sailors. Just before the eventful night, it was rumoured on good authority that a black cat had, of its own free will and accord, suddenly appeared in the theatre, and this was regarded as a most hopeful omen. It occurred to me that, if I were a lessee, I should take particular pains to attract all the sable-hued felines of the neighbourhood to my theatre when I was staging a new piece.

After the reading, Miss Litton, who, knowing the nature of the function, absented herself from it, said to me :

"How did they take it?"

Anxious to be truthful, I replied :

"I don't fancy they think much of it."

"That's all right," she said. "It's always a bad sign when a company believe in a piece at the start; it's more to the point that *I* believe in it."

Then my spirits rose once more.

As rehearsals proceeded, I began to see my imaginings take upon themselves material shape. Being but a beginner, I had to trust to *suaviter in modo* methods when I urged a fuller adherence to the text than some performers thought necessary. It is not always easy to induce a belief in the mind of an actor that what he can evolve out of his inner consciousness on the spur of the moment is not superior to what the author has carefully thought out

after full consideration and much heart-searching. However, I had not much to complain of in this respect. My only real difficulty was with Mademoiselle D'Anka, who, with every desire to attend to the author's behests, was unfavourably handicapped by an inability to speak except in very broken English. Hence the laceration of my feelings when I heard Richard I., whom she impersonated, expressing himself in a language not understood of his people. However, the good temper of the lady and her willingness to follow out my suggestion to take care of the sound and leave the sense to look after itself, ultimately resulted in nothing worse than the Lion-hearted one speaking his native tongue with a distinctly foreign accent, accounted for by his long residence abroad. Besides, such a delightful voice would render any monarch popular, and was sufficient to convince every one that the court minstrel, Blondel, couldn't have been in it with him as a vocalist.

Righton was the stage-manager, and a very good one, and, for an author, I got on very well with him. Until a playwright has attained to the status of a Gilbert, a Jones or a Pinero, I strongly advise him to keep on good terms with the stage-manager. I admit it will try him sorely to do so, but it will save time and trouble in the end.

Walter Hann, who went far in his profession in after-years, designed and painted the scenery, which was very effective. The little model stage on which the proposed scenic designs were exhibited, with a view to judging of their suitability, carried me back to my youthful days when I was the proud possessor of a toy theatre with its "penny plain, twopence coloured" performers.

Just previous to the fateful night of production the manageress and myself held a full-dress parade of the *dramatis personæ* in all their war-paint, in order to see if the latter could be improved upon, but there was little room for fault-finding. The costumes were characteristic of the period represented, with just that touch of humorous exaggeration appropriate to the spirit of burlesque, and the mounting generally did not give an author a chance to complain.

The dress rehearsal passed off satisfactorily, and we had only now to wait for the public to pronounce sentence. And here let me warn the neophyte that there are few things in this life quite so uncertain as the first night's reception of a play, for it is dependent upon more unforeseen contingencies than anything else I know of. Apart from ordinary risks, due to shortcomings on the part of author or actors, or to inefficient rehearsal, there is the temper of the public at the moment to be reckoned with, for many a play has been damned before now from causes entirely outside it. An audience may take affront at some act of the management, or at some contretemps over which the author has no control, or, on the other hand, happily, may be in such a good-natured frame of mind that they will err on the side of indulgence. So I would advise any beginner not to be unduly exalted if he scores a success or correspondingly depressed if he doesn't.

Having particularized the many preliminaries incidental to the first performance of a play, I now come to what it has all led up to: the night of production, when *Isaac of York: or Normans and Saxons at Home* had to stand or fall by the verdict—in a double sense—of the Court. As, in the author's box, I gazed around at my judges, who packed the theatre from floor to ceiling—for there was a natural desire to see what sort of a hash, or otherwise, a new man might make of it—my feelings were somewhat akin to those of a prisoner at the bar who, believing in his own innocence, thinks he may not unlikely be found guilty.

The piece preceding mine on the eventful night—which was November 29th, 1871—was a comedy-drama by H. T. Craven entitled *Coals of Fire*, which had been running some time previously, and, fortunately for me, there was nothing in it, or in anything else that night, to rouse the susceptibilities of the jury, before they sat in judgment on me. In the first five minutes from the rising of the curtain upon Cedric's Hall it was evident they were in cheerful mood, and they took everything that was offered them with zest. The middle scene, Sherwood Forest, was, however, I knew, the crux, which was likely

to make or break me, for the ball had to be kept rolling after a good deal of bustle and excitement in the previous scene, while I had several new characters to deal with. Here Cornélie D'Anka made her first appearance, and secured a triple encore for Sullivan's music, whilst Righton's topical song was still more in demand. A grand rally of Robin Hood and his merry men to the support of the King finished up the scene with every sign of approval. In the final scene, outside Torquilstone Castle, Patty Oliver made a great hit in a burlesque version of Miss Bateman's curse in *Leah*, and after the successful besieging of the castle and a grand melodramatic combat between Ivanhoe and Sir Brian, the curtain fell amid a rapturous shout of approbation. The usual compliments to the leading impersonators followed, and finally a unanimous call for the author, who gratefully responded. Behind the scenes many mutual congratulations were exchanged, and the London papers next day were more than kind.

On that first night there was one exceptional incident in connection with the performance which is worth recording. While Alfred Cellier, who afterwards achieved lasting fame as the composer of the ever-delightful *Dorothy*, conducted the orchestra most of the time, Arthur Sullivan temporarily took his place during the rendering of his own contribution. It was a stroke of good fortune, due to no merit of the author, that associated two such notable musicians with his work.

*Isaac* had a very successful career, for which I had every reason to express my indebtedness to the players, and the management made no secret of the fact that it had brought in a good deal more money to the box-office than anything previously done at the Court. I took part as a guest in a very pleasant celebration of the hundredth night of its performance. As soon as the curtain had fallen, and the audience had cleared out of the theatre, an army of workers entered it and transformed the pit into a spacious ball-room, boarding it completely over, so as to bring it on a level with the stage, which latter served as a supper-room. The dancers, who included most of the shining lights of the profession and other notabilities,

then arrived upon the scene and had a joyous time. I cannot resist quoting one quip I heard among others at that very festive gathering, as it was so much in the spirit of the occasion and came from so unexpected a quarter. I was sitting with others in one of the boxes enjoying an upper view of the gay and festive scene, when Irving, who was in the ball-room just below, came with measured stride towards us. As he did so, Miss Tremaine, a popular actress and vocalist at that time, who was sitting next to me, leaned over and said :

“Great success, Henry ! ”

The latter, with calm impassiveness and in his best tragedy-tone responded :

“Yes, *tremaindous*,” as he strode solemnly on.

*Isaac* went merrily on for some time after its centenary, out-distancing in length of run the grand spectacular drama to which it owed its origin. It was transported for matinées to the Gaiety, and it put in an appearance at Drury Lane and elsewhere at charitable performances. Then it went on tour in the provinces, and, a few years after its original production, was successfully revived at the Globe Theatre, London, with Righton still as the Jew but with a different cast in other respects.

There is a certain melancholy at this distance of time in harking back upon the past in its reminder that so many of the friends one made then have passed from human ken. Miss Litton, who gave me my chance, and whom I shall always hold in grateful remembrance for that and many courtesies, Righton, Patty Oliver, Cellier, Sullivan, all are gone. But I am glad to know that my *Ivanhoe* (Kate Bishop) and my *Sir Brian de Bois Guilbert* (Alfred Bishop) still survive as Metropolitan favourites, doing admirable work and delighting audiences as much as ever, though not playing quite the same parts as they did in the days when they and I were younger than we are now.

My career as a playwright naturally did not end with *Isaac of York*. All told, I wrote fourteen pieces, eleven of which brought grist to my mill, and the remaining three did the same for the charity for which I wrote them. But I have ceased to have any claim to be regarded as a

working playwright, having long ago surrendered myself to other distractions, less attractive perhaps, but more certain from a mundane point of view. The stage will not be half-heartedly served; it asks for a full measure of all its votaries have to give, and the result baffles all human calculations beforehand. The work is fascinating enough, and it introduced me to a new and captivating world full of interest, especially on one's first embarking upon it. If my experiences supply some hints to others desirous of entering it, I shall be well content. It is true that fashions in plays, as in other matters, have considerably changed since the night when I first sought the verdict of a London audience, but, human nature being still very much what it was, I have no reason to believe that the manners and customs of the profession have materially altered, and so what served then to bring me to the haven where I would be may perhaps serve others now. At any rate, I may have done something to show that the doors of Thespis' temple are not so securely bolted and barred against outsiders as some folk think.

Many years afterwards I sat in the stalls of the New Court Theatre, which had risen on the ashes of the old, and saw a young authoress make her grateful obeisance before the curtain in acknowledgment of the reception accorded to her first piece. And, as she owned me as her parent, that night was a welcome linking up of the present with the past.

I had one or two rather singular experiences during my brief career as a dramatic author. One morning in the seventies I had an urgent appeal from the then management of the St. James's Theatre to help them out of a difficulty. On arrival at the theatre they told me that a well-known wit and humorist—H. S. Leigh, poet and dramatist and the author of *Carols of Cockayne*—had undertaken to supply them with a revised version of *Conrad and Medora*. The scenario had been settled, and in accordance with it the scenery had been painted, a very capable company had been engaged, the costumes had been made, and, in fact, everything was in readiness except the piece itself. Half of the latter had been received and was in

active rehearsal, but no amount of pressure put upon the author could induce him to give his mind to completing his job. Under these circumstances the management begged me to help them out of the slough of despond they were in by completing the piece. This was not a job I fancied at all or one likely to bring one much credit, but, as I had had much more pleasant transactions with those who preferred the request, I had not the heart to leave them in the lurch without an effort to get them out of it. So in one of the stage-boxes I watched the rehearsal of such of the play as had been forthcoming and made my notes as it went on.

Shortly after I had begun to do this a gentleman entered the stage-box opposite the one I was in, and began to follow my example. Then the management approached me, and, full of apologies for having troubled me, explained that the gentleman in the opposite box was the author, who had unexpectedly turned up that very morning with the completed MS. in his pocket. He had no doubt ascertained that another author had been requisitioned, and this had roused his dormant faculties and set his brain in action. I assured the management that, so far from regretting this, I was only too delighted to escape having to execute such a commission. The end of it was, the lessee having slipped a £5 note into my hand, I took the first train home well content with the result. I may say that many a good man impoverishes himself by procrastination, and few faults cause more inconvenience to others. I have always made a point of being up to time, and I can't remember that I ever kept either a theatre or an editor waiting. Of course, if I had been a genius, I need not have been so particular as to this.

One frequently reads in the law reports of remarkable coincidences in relation to dramatic authorship, the same idea cropping up in two different minds almost simultaneously. The result of a hearing of evidence and addresses by counsel is either that one of the litigants has been pronounced guilty of gross piracy or else that the appropriation complained of was a mere utilization of materials as old as the hills and in which no copyright

could be claimed. In the early seventies, when I was looking about for plots for plays, I unearthed the charming Greek legend, referred to by Herodotus, of the song-poet, Arion. Having intermingled a love-interest with the poet's thrilling adventures, I evolved, out of my inner consciousness, a classical extravaganza under the title of *Arion, or a Leap for Life*. It was a very out-of-the-way subject, which no one previously had ever dreamt of dramatizing. My effort having been successfully produced in the provinces, I sent it to the Strand Theatre. After some delay it was returned to me with the stereotyped answer that they had no opening for it. Within three months from that time the theatre to which I had sent my play announced the production of what was termed "a new burlesque," entitled *Arion, or the Story of a Lyre*, by one of the most distinguished of the writers of the period of that form of drama. My Arion had a lyre as his constant companion, and the leading incident, a leap into the sea, was the same in both pieces, and there were other resemblances. I make no suggestion reflecting upon anybody, but it will be admitted that this was a remarkable coincidence. At any rate, this announcement sealed the fate of *my* Arion, because if any manager had ventured to produce it after the Strand version there would have been a cry of "plagiarism" directed against the author who came in second.

As an example of calm appropriation, the following would be hard to beat. Out of curiosity I once went to a provincial theatre to witness the performance by a travelling company of a piece described as a burlesque of *Ivanhoe*. I then found that it was my old *Isaac of York* with another name attached as author. I do not know whether or not he received any author's fees from those particular performances, but I *do* know that I didn't. I doubted, from what I saw of the company, whether they were worth powder and shot, and, as I had many other matters at that time to occupy my attention, I left the pirates alone. The way in which the piece was played induced me to be thankful, rather than otherwise, that my name was not attached to it.

My theatrical experiences would hardly be complete if I did not confess that once upon a time I had the hardihood to attempt the regeneration of pantomime, and there were people good enough to think that I did accomplish something in that direction, but, if so, the effect was very transient. I must admit that, viewed from an author's standpoint, the result fell far short of my hopes and aspirations. In my simplicity I fancied that both the public and the profession might take kindly to a stage-version of a pretty fairy story, so presented that the main incidents, accepted and believed in from time immemorial, followed in proper sequence without incoherent interruptions, thus sustaining the interest in the plot to the finish. I thought, too, that the traditional old woman—a man in petticoats—with an acknowledged craving for alcoholic drinks, and a flightiness of disposition out of harmony with her years, might be made more sober and respectable. I likewise believed that the red-nosed “knockabouts,” who were wont to burst upon the scene clad in modern garments of a flamboyant type, might be dispensed with. I sought also to disestablish other freakish monstrosities, which I need not specify. Then it was part of my scheme that every rhyming couplet should have its proper number of feet, neither more nor less; that its scansion should pass muster; that the rules of rhyme should be strictly observed; and that the whole should go trippingly on the tongue. Of course, the popular songs of the day had to be utilized, but I adapted the words to the particular situation they were intended to illustrate.

Alas, I lost sight of the fact that the average pantomime company, wedded to ancient traditions, regarded what I looked upon as mere excrescences as absolute essentials, whilst the ordinary stage-manager cared for none of the things that I thought all-important! So my efforts to substitute something in the way of humour more subtle than horseplay and a mere kicking up behind and before, and to introduce a touch of sentiment here and there, often had to give way to interpellations that made me shudder and played havoc with my fairy-story. In a

sylvan glade in Fairyland, a comedian, who had previously got into a brilliant check-suit specially for the purpose, would suddenly burst upon the scene in order to impress upon the audience in song that "At Trinity Church I met my doom," or to vocalize something akin to it, equally foreign to the situation. I would say to him: "But, my dear sir, if you *must* sing that song, I will write words for it that shall be more in harmony with the spirit of the scene, and you can sing it in a garb appropriate to the piece." This, he thought, would ruin everything. I could fight the matter oftentimes successfully at rehearsal, and then would behold the check suit and hear all about Trinity Church when it came to the public performance. I must not be too sweeping in my criticisms, because I must admit that I had little or no fault to find with the ladies of the company, for most of them respected the feelings of the author, and really did their best to do justice to his lines. But, on the whole, I had to acknowledge defeat, because it was no pleasure to try and compel people to do what they didn't want to do. So I abandoned regeneration, and left the old hands to provide something sufficiently elastic in construction to permit a go-as-you-please latitude to all concerned. I had one grain of consolation. Out of several of these productions provided by me, the most successful, in the patronage it attracted and the profit to the management, was the particular one in which the author's text was most closely adhered to, and which was really played pretty much as I wrote it. But then, on that particular occasion, I had that *rara avis*, a stage-manager with a sympathetic leaning towards an author's views. I am not sure that things are not working round towards the goal I set out to reach, and I base this impression upon the fact that pantomime is no longer the sheet-anchor of the metropolitan stage. When I was a boy it was exceptional to find a London theatre not playing it at Christmas. In the fifties, during a week in town, I saw pantomimes at Drury Lane, the Adelphi, the Princess's and Astley's, and possibly more theatres if I could recollect them. Now Drury Lane and the Lyceum are the only theatres to be counted upon for this form

of entertainment. But the fairy extravaganza type of piece, which I always aimed at, represented by *The Blue Bird*, *Where the Rainbow Ends*, *Bluebell in Fairyland*, and the like, seem to be gradually usurping the place of the older form of Christmas dramatic fare.

The theatre has been in the past what the public has made it, and the truth of the oft-quoted lines :

“ The Drama’s laws, the Drama’s patrons give,  
For he who lives to please must please to live,”

has never been controverted, so let us give all credit to the days of Victoria for service in this respect. The Drama will never cease to require the guide and check of an intelligent and healthy public opinion, and it is an encouraging sign of the times that it is forthcoming. Attempts either to suppress or ignore the Stage have been disastrous failures, and the present generation is happily adopting another course. Without depreciating in any way the Stage and its mission, we may well avoid, what is sometimes attempted, the placing it upon too high a pedestal. It is a mistake to bring the theatre into competition with the pulpit, by talking of it as a great moral teacher. It can promote morality, and do much to educate the world in many ways, and heaven forbid that we should not help it to do this by every means in our power, but we must not expect from it more than it has the power to bestow, and weary ourselves to no purpose by striving after the unattainable. We may admit that there are plays which may have the effect in their moral teaching of a sermon, but do not let us persuade ourselves that these can be the rule, or that the playhouse can compete with the Temple of the Most High.

Let us be satisfied to accept the Drama as a gift from an all-bountiful Providence, which affords to many, what human nature stands sorely in need of, an intellectual recreation for brains often jaded by the wear and tear of life’s work, besides being something that can be utilized as a valuable ally from an educational point of view. It is no ordinary boon that has the power to lead captive the imagination of the humblest ; which unfolds to us

the many-sidedness of life, and affords us glimpses of worlds other than the mere workaday one; which takes us out of ourselves into the brighter realms of Fancy; and which supplies a touch of sentiment to many a life, all the richer for possessing it. This is a generous gift enough, and one in which education will not be conspicuous by its absence. This is the Drama's mission, the fulfilling of which is the main condition of its existence, if it is to flourish; and, if the recreation we derive from it be honest, we shall probably be none the worse, morally and intellectually, for having enjoyed it.

## CHAPTER XIX

The Majesty of the Law—The Assizes—Punishments—The Apotheosis of the Stocks—Improved Methods—How a Riot was Stopped—A Day in Court—Coleridge—Chitty.

MUCH of the pomp and pageantry of the Assizes is now dispensed with. As a boy, I used to look forward to the entry of the judges into the city as a very attractive spectacle. First of all came two trumpeters, to each of whose instruments was attached a silken banner, with the arms of the High Sheriff richly emblazoned thereon. The trumpeters' mission was to sound occasional flourishes, in order to warn every one to make way for the judges, and to play the National Anthem whenever their lordships entered or alighted from their carriage. They were followed by a goodly array of men carrying javelins, and then came the gorgeous equipage, with its cock-hatted and bewigged or powdered coachman and footmen, containing the judges, the High Sheriff, the latter in either a Deputy-Lieutenant's uniform or Court-dress, and his chaplain. The javelin-bearers wore long, dark-blue, red-faced overcoats, reaching to their heels, with capes. Their head-gear was a tall hat, decorated with the Sheriff's colours in the shape of a gigantic rosette, whilst the javelins had streamers to correspond. Now there is either no escort or else a few policemen suffice, and the equipage in most cases is shorn of much of its splendour. When Colonel North was High Sheriff of Oxfordshire, the javelins were carried by a number of his principal tenantry on horseback and habited in olive-green coats, buff waistcoats, drab breeches and gaiters. On another occasion, a military High Sheriff of the same county engaged a cavalry band to play the judges in, but the latter rather objected to this on the ground, as one of

them put it, that it might lead to their being "drummed out." On the other hand, a Sheriff in a neighbouring county was fined £100 by the judges for his disrespect in providing them with no better conveyance than a fly. Where judges are concerned, it is well to hit the happy mean if possible. This was some years ago, and not long since I read in the *Times* of an order in Privy Council authorizing a High Sheriff to provide a motor-car, in place of the old-fashioned coach, for the conveyance of His Majesty's judges to the Assizes. The High Sheriff of Bucks successfully appealed on this ground to the County Tribunal for exemption of his chauffeur from military service. Possibly, the day may come when the High Sheriff may await the coming of their lordships in an aeroplane. *Tempora mutantur*, etc.

At Oxford to this day the judges, on their arrival at their lodgings, are waited on by the Vice-Chancellor and the Proctors, and the Mayor and City Sheriff, accompanied by their respective maces, when each of the two bodies presents each of their lordships with gold-fringed, white gloves, this custom not being confined to maiden-assizes. I do not know whether or not it is peculiar to Oxford.

The Victorian Era saw many great changes in the law and its administration, in the direction of making it more just, more humane and more Christian. There used to be a mistaken impression that punishment, to be effective as a deterrent, must be administered in view of all men. So we had such brutalizing sights as executions, floggings, standing in the pillory, and sitting in the stocks in the full glare of publicity. The effect was to harden the hearts of those who suffered, and in many cases to cause them to be regarded as heroes by those who had no liking for law and order. My grandfather saw men standing in the pillory and women flogged at the cart's tail, whilst my father remembered the last-named penalty being inflicted upon men, and saw drunkards and others sitting in the stocks. He related to me an instance of the latter in his own time, in which the element of comedy largely entered. An Oxford Mayor, who was a silversmith, was knighted on the occasion of a Royal visit, and a little huckster after

this made a bet that he would take his donkey into the Mayor's shop, and request his Worship to measure the animal for a pair of silver shoes. The huckster duly fulfilled his part of the undertaking, and so won his bet, though, it is hardly necessary to say, the shoes were not fitted. The Mayor was very irate, and ordered the offender to sit in the stocks, which he did. It happened, however, that the huckster, who was a well-known character, was more popular than the Chief Magistrate, and his sympathizers gathered round him when he had to undergo his punishment, and acclaimed him as a popular hero. Before he was deprived of the use of his legs, he placed his hat by his side, and his supporters, appreciating the significance of this, at once began to make it the receptacle of current coins of the realm. Others followed their example, and when the time was up for release, the owner of the hat had a substantial solatium for any inconvenience he had suffered. After straightening his legs, he emptied the contents of his head-gear into his pockets, and before placing it on his head assured the company that he should be happy to sit in the stocks on the same terms as often as they liked.

I myself never saw any one in the stocks, except on the stage, but I did see the last of the old Oxford stocks under somewhat remarkable circumstances. On the night that peace was proclaimed after the Crimean War, a monstrous bonfire was lighted in the middle of Carfax, and opposite our house. The Mayor himself set light to the pile, and parties drawn from both town and gown foraged for supplies wherewith to keep the fire going throughout the night. All was fish that came to their net, which meant all that they could beg, borrow or steal, including faggots, fencing, hurdles, gates, doors, tar-barrels, and ancient goods of every sort. The undergraduate contributions were mainly furniture from their lodgings, which they recklessly sacrificed, whilst the owner of many a garden found the next morning that he was minus his paling, his door or his tool-house, or perhaps all three, at the hands of those who thus displayed their patriotism at other folk's expense. All through the night people shouted,

danced and discharged fireworks round this festive conflagration, which I watched with the deepest interest.

The incident to which I am about to refer demonstrated the existence of a most delightful and unusual trait in the human character. A particular friend of mine when I was a child was a swarthy, gipsy-like man, with jet-black hair, known as Stemmer. He was occasionally employed by my father for odd jobs, and thus I scraped acquaintance with him, and, as he was a good-natured, kindly-hearted sort, I was fond of him. In previous years, on one occasion, he imbibed "not wisely but too well," and, as the stocks were the common and least expensive penalty for this, he one day found himself in them. He was the last man who was so punished at Oxford, and, when the stocks were disestablished, the Corporation sold them by auction with other interesting effects that nowadays we should preserve in a museum. And, strange to say, Stemmer so cherished his association with the old stocks that he actually purchased them for preservation as a family relic, and then, curiously enough, I myself saw the very last of them. As I gazed spellbound at the flaming pyre which illuminated old Carfax tower and all the surrounding houses, and provided enough light for the reading of newspapers at midnight, I suddenly heard an outburst of cheering, more than usually uproarious, and the crowd parted to allow of a passage to the fire of a foraging-party carrying a large wooden structure.

"Why," cried my father, "there's the old City Stocks."

As he said it, they were thrown on the bonfire, amid tumultuous shouts. I suppose the owner, who was a party to their destruction, thought that the greatness of the occasion demanded a corresponding sacrifice on his part, and so he yielded to the flames his family treasure, with all the personal sentiment surrounding it, as a fitting celebration of the restoration of peace. In these days, when we are more practical, we should probably have persuaded him to contribute his treasure to a Red Cross sale at Christie's. This was the crowning incident of an ever-to-be-remembered night.

In these retrospections, nothing strikes one more

forcibly than the advance, during the early Victorian period, in the general conception of what was our standard of duty and obligation towards those who have to be regarded as the feeble folk of the world. This is one of the chief glories of the Victorian regime, and the evidence of it is to be found in the large development of individual effort in this direction, and in the philanthropic legislation which is a distinguishing characteristic of that time. Any reference to such legislation brings to mind the honoured name of Lord Shaftesbury, whose noble-hearted efforts, on behalf of the poor and the oppressed, will long be held in grateful remembrance by all who recognize the claims of suffering humanity. The cry of the women and children touched his heart, and he did not rest until the heart of the nation was touched also. Our poor, our lunatics, and our criminals have a consideration and care bestowed upon them far beyond what was the case at the beginning of the reign, and until the public conscience was aroused to the defects in our methods. We do not now think it necessary, when we have to punish a criminal, that it must be done in the full glare of publicity, and we have, happily, lost that erroneous idea that this was calculated to promote the cause of public morality. As a child, I once witnessed a sight which has remained impressed upon my memory. It was a gang of prisoners, all chained together and guarded by warders, brought through the public streets in broad daylight, in full gaze of a gaping crowd, on their way from the gaol to the Assize Court. Happily, such a lack of human sympathy would be impossible to be publicly exhibited now. Public executions, in the minds of the lower classes especially, were regarded as free shows, full of pleasurable excitement. I remember the laundress of my parents' household telling the servants that she and a party from the country had arranged to start from home in the middle of the night, in order to get a good front place at the hanging, and our cook petitioned to be allowed to rise at an abnormally early hour for the same purpose.

Although one would not for a moment desire any return to the Draconian code of the past, I am inclined to think we are too apt now to err on the side of misplaced leniency

when dealing with lawlessness. In recent years, outbreaks of violence, which might have been stopped at the outset had more firmness been shown, illustrate this and afford object-lessons of the folly of paltering with the enemies of law and order till they have grown sufficiently strong in conceit to set all authority at defiance.

These lamentable instances show the ineptitude of dealing with local outbreaks of disorder in a timorous and half-hearted spirit. Organized attempts upon persons and property, if promptly grappled with, usually give little trouble afterwards, but once let disturbers of the peace get out of hand, and the end can never be foreseen. A bucket of water may put out a fire at its start, whereas, when it has made headway, it may take all the fire-engines in the place to subdue it.

A notable instance of the value of firmness and promptitude in dealing with the anarchical spirit comes within the area of my personal experiences. On an evening in November, 1867, Arthur Lloyd, one of the comic vocalists of his day, gave an entertainment at the Town Hall, Oxford. There was nothing particularly exciting about it, or anything specially calculated to arouse angry passions. There was plenty of harmless noise to be got out of "Oh, Kafoozleum," and similar ditties in the chorus of which the whole house distinguished itself, but nothing worse than this. However, when the undergraduates, who formed a large portion of the audience, streamed out of the hall, they were, for some reason or another, just spoiling for a fight, and a number of them, linking arms, took possession of the roadway, shouting the Varsity war-cry of "Gown, gown." The challenge was quickly taken up, all the readier because, it being Saturday night, the streets were fuller than usual of townsfolk and outsiders, and soon there came the customary response of "Town, town." There was nothing very unusual in this, because, once a year, at least, on Guy Fawkes Day, the streets re-echoed with similar shouts as the preliminary to many bouts of fisticuffs, but November 5th was past and gone for this particular year. On the occasion in question, the Proctors had no difficulty in dealing with the academic element, and ere long most of

the undergraduates were safely bestowed within college walls.

Then, contrary to all precedent, "the town," lacking the presence of their hereditary foe, looked round for something or somebody to take its place, and suddenly there was raised the cry of "Cheap bread." This appeared to many more exactly to fit the case, and so, quickly taken up, it soon resounded through the streets. In order to translate the sentiment into action, a move was made to the business premises of the chief corn and flour dealer in the place, and a smashing of his windows followed. The mob, which seemed now to have its leaders, having tasted blood, were rampant for more, and so made its way to a baker's shop and demolished its glass. The Mayor, who had only been elected the day before, thought it about time to have a say in the matter, so, mounted on a chair in front of the Police Station, he attempted to address the disturbers. He was not only denied a hearing but was in danger of actual violence, for a large stone, aimed at him, passed within a few inches of his head, and smashed a pane of glass immediately behind him. The mob then adjourned to St. Giles's, where a number of speakers harangued them, demanding reform and cheap bread. Some skirmishes took place with the police, who made a few captures, and by about three o'clock the malcontents, having had enough of it for that night, went home to bed. Additional uneasiness in connection with this outbreak was caused by the fact that a considerable number of workmen engaged on the erection of Keble College and another large building were out on strike at this time.

The next day, Sunday, passed off without any worse happenings than crowds congregating in the streets, though the presence of several suspicious-looking characters, strangers to the place, was noted with some apprehension. On Monday, information reached the authorities, represented by the Vice-Chancellor, the Mayor, and a Committee of Safety, of a nature sufficient to satisfy them that special protection was needed at once. A telegram was, therefore, despatched to the Home Office, asking for military assistance. Large numbers of citizens, including myself, and

University men, were sworn in as special constables, and, provided with implements of war, in the shape of staves, whilst all the members of both the University and the City Rifle Volunteer Corps, enrolled themselves as constables, maintaining their military organization, for purposes of action, and their usual officers being in command. The War Office complied with the call for help by sending by special train two companies of the 1st Battalion of Grenadier Guards. They were fully accoutred for active service, and forty rounds of ammunition were served out to each man. I saw them march through the streets with bayonets fixed, amid the cheers of the law-abiding members of the community. They were quartered in the old Corn Exchange, a spacious building, adjoining the Town Hall. The University and City Volunteers awaited events in the municipal buildings, and special constables were disposed about the town. Most of the shops put up their shutters, the public houses were ordered to be closed at an early hour, and persons, not special constables, were warned not to appear in the streets. All these precautions having been taken, peace-loving citizens awaited the issue with anxious expectation, but without any misgivings.

As soon as darkness set in, crowds began to assemble and window-smashing was resumed, the attitude of the mob being so threatening that the Mayor determined to read the Riot Act. This he did on a chair outside of the Police Station by the light of a lamp, the glass of which was smashed by a stone as he stood under it. The authorities had determined that they would not avail themselves of the services of the Guards unless it were absolutely necessary, but the moment it was, they were to quell the riot at any cost. In the meantime, they stood under arms in the Corn Exchange, ready to issue therefrom at a given signal. As the reading of the Riot Act did not appear to impress the rioters, who were assembled in strong force on Carfax, the University and City Volunteers were ordered to come forth from the Town Hall and advance to the attack. The University men, some hundreds strong, were permitted, at their own particular desire, to be in the van, and I shall never forget their swift and joyous onrush.

In a spirit of the keenest enjoyment, with an ecstatic shout, they fell upon the mob in front of them with irresistible determination, and mowed them down as though they had been grass. In fancy, I can hear now the rapping of the staves upon the heads of the discomfited disturbers, intermingled with the cries of the wounded. I never heard anything more like a wholesale cracking of nuts than it was, and this simile is appropriate enough in view of the fact that it was human nuts which were in the grip of the crackers.

The rioters, quite unprepared for such an onslaught, made but a feeble resistance, and in a very few minutes turned and ignominiously fled. That practically settled the whole business, and we City Volunteers never got a look in at this crowning victory. There were isolated skirmishes in various parts of the city, but they were only of the guerilla-warfare type. The insurgents, or whatever they called themselves, were overmatched throughout. Early in the evening, and previous to the Carfax battle, a large contingent of them proceeded to the country residence, about a mile and a half from the city, of a flour-merchant, with a view to wrecking it. But the intelligence department of the authorities had been forewarned, and a posse of police-constables, reinforced by a contingent of special constables, ambushed themselves in the grounds. They allowed the would-be wreckers to advance some distance along the carriage-way to the house, and then, while the police cut off their retreat, the specials rushed out and hammered them. Outnumbered, they took to their heels in a spirit of devil take the hindmost, whilst the constables, knowing the lay of the land, drove them into a field at the back of the house, skirting the lower end of which was a branch of the river Cherwell. Arrived at its banks, the driven ones had the choice of either plunging into the stream or surrendering, and the majority preferred to trust themselves to the water rather than fall into the hands of man.

By midnight, the riot was practically over and done, but precautions were not relaxed, and constables patrolled the streets throughout the night, clearing the thoroughfares

of all who were not on duty. There was a slight recrudescence of disturbance the following night, but by turning on the fire-plugs in every direction, and by making a judicious use of the fire-engine hose, the authorities managed to throw cold water upon any further attempt. The heart had been so taken out of the peace-disturbers the previous evening that any ardour remaining with them was easily extinguished. After all, the Guards were never called upon, and in a day or two they left, and the city resumed its wonted tranquillity. Some of the constables were roughly handled, and there must have been a good many casualties, in the shape of broken crowns, in the ranks of the enemy. There was one very sad fatality on the other side, an undergraduate during the fighting was knocked down, and when down a cowardly ruffian violently kicked him on the head. This produced concussion of the brain, which resulted in his death. There was a sufficient number of the rioters apprehended to keep the magistrates employed for two or three days, meting out justice to them, which consisted in various terms of imprisonment. Several formidable weapons of the life-preserver type were among the spoils of war, and evidence showed that but for the timely arrival of the military there would, in all probability, have been a great destruction of property.

All the officials concerned in bringing to naught what might have been a very serious outbreak have no doubt by this time passed away, and the incidents with which they had to deal have almost gone out of remembrance. But, as one of the comparatively few left who, though in an insignificant capacity, had some part in the events recorded, I feel justified in reviving the memory of them, if only to pay tribute to those who dealt so firmly and courageously with a difficult situation. Had they been as weak as the Bristol authorities were at the time of the Reform Riots, some priceless treasure-houses might have shared the fate of the Bishop's Palace in the Western city. The courage of those responsible for the safety of University and city in sending, without a moment's delay, for the military, did more than anything else to save the situation. It was proof positive that the authorities knew their own

mind, and meant business, and it was made clear that if the soldiery had to fire it would not be with blank cartridge. Because the red-coats were known to be close at hand they were never required. Had they been miles away, there would probably have been good reason for praying for them. The knowledge of such a power at hand had just the effect which experience shows it usually has upon the minds of self-appointed leaders in most disturbances—a paramount desire to save their own skins and leave their misguided dupes to face the music and pay the penalty. The stuffing was taken out of the rank and file before ever the Volunteers came to grips with them, by the knowledge that behind the batons were the ball-cartridges.

Some real good came out of the rioting, for it hastened a reformation of the police arrangements. There had always been two separate police forces, having little or no relationship to each other, the city being trusted with guardianship by day and the University by night. Each force was separately controlled, had its own police station and its own attire. The city force wore the usual police uniform of the period: dark-blue trousers and tail coats with white metal buttons and tall hats; while the University force had dark-blue trousers and coats with brass buttons and tall hats, with, on special occasions, white trousers. The University force was subject to no Government inspection, whereas the city force was, and for years the inspector had described it as second to none in inefficiency. The experiences I have detailed warned both authorities of the necessity of setting their house in order, so an Act of Parliament was obtained authorizing the establishment of a joint constabulary force under the control of a Joint Committee. An able and tactful inspector of the metropolitan police was put at its head; the ancients and incapables, of which the two old forces were largely composed, were placed on the retired list, and there have been no further attempts at "bread riots" since.

History is apt to repeat itself, and the rioting of my own time had its counterpart in several particulars in 1800. Valentine Cox, the esquire bedel, whom I knew, tells in his diary how in that year he saw the bakers' shops at Oxford

attacked by an angry multitude, and the Vice-Chancellor going in procession to Carfax to read the Riot Act. The Guards were not called upon, but the University Volunteers of that day, as they were in my day, were assembled in readiness in case they were required, but the special constables were found sufficient to restore order.

At my first introduction to a Court of Justice, I happened, without any previous anticipation of what was in store, to be present upon what, those learned in the law have told me since, was an historic occasion. One day, in the spring of 1854, we had, at the school I was at, a whole holiday, and my father gave me the option of spending it at the Court, where the Oxford Assizes were going on. As, even in those days, I was always ready to go after strange sights, I jumped at the chance of seeing a real live judge at work. So betimes the next morning, my father took me to the judgment-hall, where, owing to his influence, I was allotted a good seat in the body of the Court, though what a small boy could be supposed to be doing there I don't know. I listened with much attention to the counsel for the prosecution in the opening case, and by the time he had done I was so convinced that the prisoner was one of the greatest rogues unhung that I thought the judge would have sentenced him straight off. But, after the opposing counsel had had his say, I veered completely round and regarded his client as one of the most injured and long-suffering of mortals. I had not the slightest doubt that the jury would at once acquit him, and I felt so sorry that the man should have been so misunderstood. To my utter astonishment, however, the jury at once found him guilty, and the remarks of the judge, in passing sentence, showed that he entirely agreed with their verdict.

There were one or two other cases, which have passed out of my recollection, but the last one of all will always dwell in my memory. It was a case of bigamy, and I can still see the pathetic figure of the poor, blubbering man, as he stood in the dock, having pleaded guilty, and in broken accents appealed for mercy. He was a coal-heaver and he looked it. He was in the old-fashioned clothes of his

calling in those days, including breeches and thick worsted stockings. He told how his wife had rendered his house desolate by robbing it and then running away with her paramour. He waited some years, and, hearing nothing of her, married again, and was living happily when she swooped down upon him and informed against him for bigamy. Now it happened that the Judge was Sir William Maule, who enjoyed a reputation for combining a knowledge of the law with common sense. But, above all, he was noted for his ironic humour. In this particular case, I remember perfectly the scathing way in which, in a vein of grim comedy, he satirized the working of his country's laws. Especially impressed upon my mind is his concluding sentence, in which he said to the prisoner :

"The law compels me to punish you, and so I sentence you to one day's imprisonment, which means that you will be set at liberty at once."

It was only within the last few months that I realized, from what legal experts told me, how far-reaching in its effects was this judgment. This intensified my interest in the recollection sufficiently to induce me to obtain a copy of the full remarks of the judge. I could remember the gist of it, but the actual words are worth quoting. Addressing the prisoner, he said :

"You should have brought an action, and obtained damages, which the other side would probably not have been able to pay, and you would have had to pay your own costs, perhaps £100 or £150. You should then have gone to the ecclesiastical courts and obtained a divorce *a mensa et thoro*, and then to the House of Lords, where, having proved that those preliminaries had been complied with, you would have been enabled to marry again. The expense might amount to five or six hundred, or perhaps a thousand, pounds. You say you are a poor man. But I must tell you that there is not one law for the rich and another for the poor."

In this caustic fashion did Maule indict the law he had to administer, but the implied rebuke hit the mark he aimed at, and did more than anything else to bring about a reform of the divorce laws, after a determined resistance

to any change. As they then stood, three suits, Ecclesiastical, Civil and Parliamentary, were necessary, in order to obtain a divorce, which practically enabled the rich man to compass his end, and drove the poor man to bigamy.

My memory of the incident was recently corroborated by Lord Justice Scrutton, who in the Court of Appeal quoted Justice Maule's remarks as I heard them, and followed this up by adding that any High Court Judge knew how many bigamy cases resulted from "the inability of the poor man to find the money for divorce and the desire of himself and the woman to look respectable by going through a second form of marriage."

The most delightful occupant of the Bench to listen to I ever heard was Lord Chief Justice Coleridge, whose elocution was practically faultless. There were a mellifluence of utterance and a persuasiveness of tone which were irresistible. His enunciation was perfect, inasmuch as it gave every syllable its due, and nothing could better illustrate the term "honed accents." His summings-up were models of clearness, and he appeared to address himself to each individual jurymen; at least, that was my own feeling when I was in the box, for he seemed to look me straight in the face as though I, of all others, had to be convinced; and probably every other jurymen felt similarly. As an after-dinner speaker, he was one of the best, for he united with classicality of expression a lightness of touch and just that undercurrent of suggestiveness calculated to give his hearers, who were in a frame of mind to appreciate it, "a guid conceit o' themselves"; leastways, that's how it affected me.

To a slight acquaintance with another judge, Justice Chitty, I owe an evening which was much pleasanter than it otherwise would have been. Chitty, with all his legal knowledge, was better known to the man in the street as the umpire for many years of the Oxford and Cambridge Boat Race than as a Q.C., or anything else. Previous to his elevation to the Bench, he represented the city of Oxford in Parliament for a short time, and this brought me into contact with him. He was a most agreeable man, and never allowed the fact that I actively opposed his

candidature to affect our relations. Shortly after his promotion to a judgeship, I was honoured by an invitation to attend the Lord Mayor's Guildhall Banquet on the ninth of November. Very ordinary folk like myself had to take our seats at the tables some time before the entry in procession of such distinguished personages as judges, ministers of state, ambassadors, etc., and my seating lot was cast among a number of strangers to me, common council-men and others, who conversed across me with each other, but left me severely alone. In accordance with custom, the aforesaid distinguished guests, to the inspiring strains of a triumphal march, played by a Guards' band, make a circuit of the hall previous to taking their seats, so as to allow the commonalty to gaze upon their features, at close quarters. Among the judges, scarlet-robed and bewigged, was Chitty, and when he caught sight of me, as he passed along, he turned and favoured me with a most profound and dignified bow. The effect upon those in whose midst I found myself was most marked. Conversation, which had previously passed me by, flowed in my direction, and apparently I became an object of regard and esteem, as somebody whom a real live judge thought worth noticing. This deference, to which I knew I had no earthly claim, nevertheless imparted a distinct relish to the turtle soup and added to the exhilarating quality of the champagne. At the same time, it was an assurance that the company did not connect the recognition with any of those untoward circumstances under which individuals are sometimes brought face-to-face with judges, and was a very pleasant preliminary to the speech-making, which latter, being contributed to by Gladstone and other orators, afforded me unbounded pleasure. A brilliantly illuminated invitation-card and a copy of the menu to correspond are my abiding memorials of the occasion.

## CHAPTER XX

The Evolution of a Journalist—Some Hints to Beginners—My First Journalistic Earnings—A Phantom Legacy—The Editorial Chair—The Press-Man and his Work.

“**L**ITERATURE,” says Lord Morley, “is the most seductive, the most deceiving, and the most dangerous of all professions.” But there is an old saying that “what is bred in the bone is born in the flesh,” and this may account for my having, from my earliest youth, been a victim to that incurable malady generally known as “*cacoëthes scribendi*,” for my father, who was a journalist, a writer on general subjects, and a poet—of a sort—was never happier than when he was handling a pen. And this, after all, is the best test as to whether one has, or has not, any aptitude for literary work—or what may pass for it. If any one says he is very fond of such work and believes he could succeed at it if he tried and had the opportunity of showing what he could do, his friends should use every endeavour to persuade him to give his mind to something else. If a man has the genuine literary spirit he does not wait for an opportunity, he makes it. He is continually scribbling for the mere love of the thing and because he can’t help himself. He scorns the discouragements he is sure to get, and slogs away as though his life depended on it. If he is imbued with this spirit, he has every chance of reaching the goal of his ambition in time, but I would not give much for his chance under other circumstances.

The aspirant must take this counsel for what it is worth, but I believe it to be sound. And now supposing he has satisfied himself that he possesses the necessary ardour, pertinacity and staying power, let him beware of the temptation to sacrifice all else to what at the start should be

regarded as a recreation or a hobby to be pursued when other more important matters are in abeyance, for it must not supplant them. There is a great inducement to mount Pegasus and soar above the world of ordinary work, but comparatively few authors are born to affluence, and those who are not need some sustenance whilst tiding over the time of probation. An American bard sings as follows of the uncertain rewards of literature, and it was in view of this that I desired to have another string to my bow :

" Many a man on the road of life  
Succeeds where another fails ;  
Johnny is writin' stories,  
An' Billy is splittin' rails.  
Johnny is makin' a name an' fame  
(He says) while the years roll on ;  
But Billy is makin' the money,  
An' Billy's supportin' John ! "

There is no royal road to literature, and, as a rule, the conditions under which it is successfully pursued can only be learnt in the school of hard experience. This is all for the best, as it tends towards securing the survival of the fittest : those with enough enthusiasm to stand the stress and strain of the journey towards their goal. It is not necessary to be a genius—otherwise I should have been hopelessly out of it—in order to succeed in journalism, if it be allowable, which some dispute, to regard it as a branch of literature at all.

My own experiences were extremely commonplace, but, perhaps, they may serve as an encouragement to those who have the call of the blood and cannot resist it, although, like myself, they may not labour under any illusion that they can set the Thames on fire. My first attempts were in the nature of very descriptive and voluminous epistles addressed to long-suffering friends and relatives who offered no discouragement to such efforts. Then I flew at higher game, and wrote essays on such diverse subjects as the " Natural History of the Polar Regions " and " Lighthouses " in competition for prizes offered by *The Boys' Own Magazine*. Of course, had I been a budding genius, I should have carried all before me, as is the wont of such, according to the self-help biographies. But not

coming under this category, others, who possibly did, won the prizes, and I had to be content with nothing better than honourable mention.

Before I left school I had written my first newspaper paragraph, for which, needless to say, I received no payment beyond the honour and glory of seeing myself in print. But a good deal of the gilt was rubbed off the gingerbread when I came face to face with the cold heartlessness of type. The editor had entrusted me with what I regarded as the onerous and responsible duty of furnishing him with a record of a local amateur concert. Full of the importance of the mission, I determined to rise to the occasion, and, in unhappy obliviousness of a newspaper having certain limitations as to size, I spread myself out in all directions. I regarded each performer in the light of a coming Jenny Lind or Sims Reeves, and enlarged upon their capabilities accordingly, whilst I devoted much friendly criticism to compositions of world-wide repute, garnishing the whole with a few apropos quotations by our best-known authors.

My feelings can be better imagined than described when I eagerly tore open the local print, and, after some searching, discovered in an obscure corner of the paper a very abbreviated report of my concert. It was the leg of mutton shorn of all its trimmings or, as it appeared to me, of all its picturesqueness and piquancy. But the lesson was not lost upon me, for, when I had cooled down and thought the matter out, it dawned upon me that a sense of proportion was very necessary in those who aspired to write for the press, and that a parish sing-song must not be regarded from quite the same standpoint as the Handel Festival. Beginners will do well to note this. Soon after I left school I began to write regularly for a newspaper, my favourite subjects being of an antiquarian character. I also contributed to the poet's corner and the correspondence columns, and wrote a series of articles on local observances, which put me into some credit, though I had not yet enough confidence in myself to attach my name to my lucubrations, and, what was more material, I had not reached the stage when editors were ready to remunerate

me for what I wrote. However, while in this way I was learning something of journalism, I was earning a regular salary in a more prosaic way, so that I could afford to live on hope, so far as press emoluments were concerned.

For many years my father had been the University correspondent of the *Morning Post*, when that paper, at the price of threepence, devoted much more space to academic and clerical matters than it does now, and, on his death, I had the hardihood to offer myself for the post, but with faint hopes of obtaining it. A friendly journalist of my acquaintance kindly pointed out to me how impossible it was for any one with my limited knowledge of journalism to be able to discharge the duties which would be required of me. I thought he was probably right, but I did not follow his advice. So I made the venture, and, contrary to all anticipation, the rank outsider, myself, came in first with a string of experts at my heels, including my disinterested adviser, who had marked the post for his own. It was a coveted berth, because it meant a regular fixed salary payable every quarter-day and not a "lineage" engagement, which might mean much or little. I don't for a moment desire to convey that I won on my merits, for I put it down entirely to a kindly feeling, which I have never ceased to hold in regard, on the part of the editor, who was willing to give the son of their old correspondent a chance. As it was, I was temporarily appointed for two months, so that I might supply a taste of my quality before anybody was committed to anything; a very reasonable arrangement. At the end of that period I waited with breathless anxiety for the verdict, represented by a notice of either acceptance or rejection. Neither came, merely a cheque for salary due, and, although I held the post for sixteen years—in fact, until I voluntarily surrendered it on leaving Oxford—there was never anything in the nature of an agreement between us or a line of writing that could bind anybody. The representatives of the paper maintained to the finish their character for kindness and courtesy by accepting my nomination of a successor.

I had one disappointment in connection with the above-named paper through no fault of my own. During my

term of office the proprietor died, and generously left a legacy to each of the staff whose association with the *Post* had extended over a stated period. One fine morning I was apprised of this, and was requested to come to London on a certain day to take my share. This was a most unexpected and pleasurable intimation, and, in order to run no risk of failing, through train delays, to be up to time, I journeyed to town the night before. On arriving at the office I was shown into a room, where I found a little old gentleman possessing his soul in patience till he was summoned upstairs to receive his cheque. We had some friendly talk, and, when he heard I was from Oxford, he at once, although he knew not my name, inquired if I had any knowledge of a gentleman of the name of Plowman, who, years ago, was the honorary secretary of the City Public Lectures there. I was able to reply that he had joined the majority, that I was his son, and that the old lectures had come to an end years ago. Then, as I wondered who my interrogator was, memory came to the rescue, and I suddenly connected the face before me with some delightful hours I had spent, as a child, listening to the lectures and readings of one who was full of humour. I said :

“ Why, you are George Grossmith ! ”

And then we grasped hands and exchanged confidences. He had for many years been the Police Court correspondent of the paper, and was the father of the hero of Gilbert and Sullivan Opera. Ere long he had his summons, and, on his return, he flourished a cheque for £70 under my nose, with the remark :

“ There, my boy, you are not likely to get less ! ”

This was so far probable that I would not at that moment have taken £50 for my chance. I responded with cheerful alacrity to my call when it came, and was ushered into the presence of the legacy-distributors. I was about to take my cheque when some one, apparently out of mere curiosity, unfortunately asked me how long I had been connected with the *Post*. The exact date of my entering upon my duties was so indelibly impressed upon my memory that I had no difficulty in answering the question.

Thereupon I was asked if I were quite sure about the date, as the legacy depended upon it. I felt bound to say that I had no doubt about it, and then, with many expressions of regret, I was told that I had missed the legacy by about two months. The executors apologized for fetching me to London on a profitless errand, and I had the barren consolation of being assured that they would much rather than not have paid me the legacy could they have legally done so after my statement.

The fact that, as I have already explained, there had never been any formal agreement between the *Post* and myself, coupled with the fact that my predecessor bore the same surname as I did, probably accounted for the belief that I was entitled to be a beneficiary under the will. There is a proverb which has some application to the case that "You can buy gold too dear," and the purchase price of the legacy, when it meant saying that which was not, was too high. At the same time I admit that I felt much sadder as I returned down the Strand than I did when, full of pleasurable anticipations, I walked up it. I had thought that I should be fully justified in enjoying myself after I had the legacy cheque safe in my pocket, so I had booked for myself a dress-circle seat for a comic opera at the old Strand Theatre. I had looked forward to a regular rollicking afternoon, and pictured myself roaring at and applauding any and every joke, good or bad, because I should be just in the vein to be pleased with anything and everything. Alas, how different the reality! It was all Dead Sea fruit, and laughter seemed a hollow mockery with melancholy brooding over it all. There was no cheerful lilt about the music, and the tame and far-fetched humour grated upon my nerves. It clearly demonstrated, as I have better realized since, how much life's pleasures are dependent upon our condition of mind at the moment. How easy it is to overlook faults and failings when one is in a joyous mood, only too ready to be indulgent, and how apt one often is to apportion indiscriminate blame for minor shortcomings when one's mind is out of tune with things in general! A truism this, but one of which most of us want an occasional reminder, and it is borne in upon me in its full force

when I think of that dreary afternoon in the dress circle of the little Strand Theatre.

Other press commissions came my way, and soon I was supplying weekly articles to two Church papers and to one local paper. Each of course had to be written in a different strain, as no paper wanted a reduplication of what another had.

I was also a regular contributor to the leading organ of the theatrical profession, did a bit of book-reviewing and a little playwriting. All such work had to be accomplished in such time as I could spare from more serious occupations, which were too certain as sources of income to be discarded. These embraced a librarianship and several secretaryships, which were my financial sheet-anchors.

Then one fine day when I was at my desk in the Library, revolving bibliographical problems in my mind, a member of the staff of the leading county newspaper, the *Oxford Journal*, which celebrated its centenary in 1853, presented himself, and told me that the dual office of editor and general manager of the paper was vacant. Further, to my utter astonishment, he assured me that I had only to offer myself for the post to get it. I had never edited a newspaper, but I proffered my services, which were accepted. The work was hard—as it included the general business management as well as the editing—but congenial, and the pay was adequate. Beyond this, there went with it a delightful old house, with panelled rooms, situated in that picturesque and ancient thoroughfare known as Holywell, which has often figured in Oxford novels. Attached to the residence was a large old-fashioned garden, entirely in harmony with the house in its features and surroundings. Running alongside its length was the city's ancient battle-mented wall, an impressive reminder of the days before gunpowder was invented. For many, many years it had been, and is still, the boundary-wall of New College, whose founder was permitted so to utilize it on condition that the college always maintained it in such a state of repair as to render it ever available for purposes of defence.

Nearly everything in connection with the paper itself bore the impress of age, and this particularly applied to

those who printed it. It was an event of very rare occurrence for any one, until death intervened, ever to leave the office—they simply went on till the last hour of act. One compositor had been there over sixty years, and only the apprentices approximated at all to youth. The master-printer began there as a boy before the introduction of railways, and he often told me how, as soon as the weekly issue came from the press, he used to take the papers, done up in bundles for distribution throughout the district, to the city's chief centre, Carfax, where the four principal thoroughfares intersected. Then, as each coach came galloping through, he had to throw up the bundle intended for it to be caught by the guard for delivery. Woe betide the thrower if he missed his aim, for the coach waited not to give him a second chance. The office was archaic in other ways, especially with respect to its machinery, some of the old hand-presses reminding one of similar relics in the *Musée Plantin* at Antwerp. As the paper had a large country circulation, it had an agent, who acted also as press correspondent, in every small town over a wide area, and their reports of the doings in the little world in which they lived frequently brought back to my mind the memory of my own first newspaper effort, already referred to. Then were feelings lacerated when the remorseless blue pencil did its relentless work, and some of the letters of remonstrance were almost pathetic. But newsagents are not all trained experts in expression or adepts in the art of condensation, and, until my advent upon the scene, there was a good deal of go-as-you-please latitude allowed with respect to their descriptive methods. Many of the phrases in use when the *Journal* first started in 1753, and which the world at large had long discarded—such as “sen’night” and the like—still put in a regular appearance, and it seemed almost sacrilegious to dispossess them. However, by dint of going gently, I maintained amicable relations with everybody, including “the chapel,” who had no occasion to gather round “the altar-stone” to vindicate any rights I may have interfered with, and when the hour of parting came I took away with me a valued memento of their goodwill.

In a university city an editor is naturally brought into immediate contact with personalities not common to all cities and towns, but which add an interest of their own to his day's work. I had a happy but too busy a time for my health's sake during the years I occupied the editorial seat, for I retained several public appointments I had previously held, including the secretaryship of the Oxfordshire Agricultural Society. This meant burning the candle at both ends and working whilst better-regulated folk were abed and asleep. When the Annual Show was held, as it usually was, in a distant part of the county, after I had wound up matters on the last night of it, I used to post back by train or vehicle the same night, and on arrival home go straight to the newspaper office and work on till well into the next day. Then Bath came to the rescue by summoning me thither, and so saved me, I verily believe, from an untimely grave.

Now before I part from my recollections, so far as this branch of my subject is concerned, and journalism having done well by me, I will venture, for the encouragement of those whose ambition runs as mine did, to point out that the principles I mentioned at the start did not fail me in practice. That is to say, the working for nothing to begin with turned out in the end to have been a profitable expenditure of time and trouble, and my determination not to abandon less attractive occupations for literary work also justified itself. I always regretted I never wrote shorthand, but I did not start with any settled intention to adopt journalism as a profession, regarding it more as a diversion than anything else, and the opportunity to take it seriously came at a moment when I had too many other claims upon me to allow of my giving time to the acquisition of stenography.

As it happened, I got on all right without shorthand because I was called upon to supply descriptive rather than verbatim matter for the printers. I had, too, a fairly retentive memory, so that if I wanted to write an epitome of a speech or a sermon, a keynote, in the shape of a word or two, would enable me to finger out the tune afterwards.

One advantage in being brought face to face by actual

practice with journalistic work is that it naturally enables one to have a better understanding of its difficulties and to make allowances for them. In recent days the press has become much more a part and parcel of our daily life than it was when I was a boy. Two circumstances, both arising in my own time, go far to account for this : the abolition of the stamp duty in 1855, which cheapened newspapers, and the passing of the Education Act in 1870. Added to these, there is a much more widely-spread interest than formerly, on the part of every section of the community, and especially of the working-classes, in the affairs of the nation in particular and the world in general, and the press meets this craving. Hence, we all, officials especially, come more frequently into contact than we did with those representing the press, and have fuller opportunities of either helping or hindering them in the discharge of their duties. To my own knowledge, the reporter was years ago too often regarded by most officials, secretaries included, as, in their own words, "a perfect nuisance, always prying about to ferret out things"; just as if that wasn't the very object for which he was created. From observations I myself have heard, one would think a press representative was a mere curiosity-monger of the Paul Pry type, who, for lack of a better recreation, employed his leisure in investigating other people's affairs. Yet he was only pursuing a very useful vocation, and one which nowadays could not be dispensed with without serious detriment to the well-being of the community. My only regret is that he did not come into existence some centuries ago, for then we might have had a much fuller and more reliable account than we at present possess of the landing of Julius Cæsar on our shores, of the signing of Magna Charta, and of other interesting episodes in our history. Those who do not share my regard for "the fourth estate" will perhaps kindly make allowances for one who has gone through the mill.

One other point. Cultured people, who are apt to make much of the iniquities of the split infinitive and such-like offences against the light, frequently point the finger of scorn at what they are pleased to call "newspaper-English." No one will venture to assert that in a press

column is always to be found that "pure well of English undefiled," from which all of us who try to express ourselves would desire to draw our inspiration. But allowance is not always made for the circumstances under which an article or a report has to flow from the pen. It has often to be written at a moment's notice and in the shortest possible time, so that the writer may not commit the unpardonable sin, in the eyes of the master-printer, of keeping the press waiting. There are some things that must be done quickly or not at all.

Whether it be a leader, or an account of a railway collision, power of observation and the knack of making the facts intelligible to the man in the street are the most essential qualifications required in a journalist. These are more important than classicality of expression, however desirable the latter may be, or a strict adherence to all the rules and regulations laid down by grammarians, who expect a sentence to have as immaculate a record as a candidate for holy orders or the holder of a beer licence. It is one of my present occupations to have to examine authors' MSS. with a view to ascertaining their suitability or otherwise for publication, and my experience is that some of those who have least capacity for putting their observations in a way to be understood of the people are college-trained men who have had the fullest opportunity to acquire what is known as "style." A sentence may fulfil all that mere syntax and prosody require, but if it does not bring clearly home to the mind of the reader what the writer desires to impress upon him, it is little better than sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal, however correctly attuned these may be. An article may conform to every one of the laws of composition, and yet be very dull and uninspiring. I venture to think that, if not pushed too far, even a free-and-easy colloquialism is better than this and likely to be much more convincing.

My readers will probably find in this remark something in the nature of a personal extenuation, inasmuch as I am apt, as regards verbal expression, to put myself on a somewhat familiar footing with them in preference to addressing them in irreproachable English—even supposing I could

write it—at the cost of suppressing my natural self. But I like to fancy myself exchanging confidences with friends and neighbours in as unfettered a spirit as possible, and had I attempted to eliminate my own personality from what I had to say it would have rendered my task toilsome rather than pleasurable.

## CHAPTER XXI

Some Phases of Victorian Art—The Restoration Period—The Gothic Revival—The Pre-Raphaelites—Their Dissolution.

ART in England had suffered much in the past from the effects of two Revolutions, neither of which was specially directed against it. The Reformers could hardly be considered as friendly to Art, or they would have spared much that they destroyed, whilst the Puritans were nothing less than its sworn enemies. For many years beauty in things ecclesiastical appears to have been regarded as an incentive to idolatry, and ugliness as an essential to piety. When at last human nature began to reassert itself, and to rebel against the doctrine that what was pleasing to the senses was displeasing to the Almighty, a new danger to Art set in in a zeal for what was miscalled "restoration," as applied to church architecture, especially. Architects of the Wyatt type began, at the end of the eighteenth century, to tinker up the work which such men as William of Wykeham had left as a glorious heritage of their genius, and the beauty of which had survived the destruction wrought by ecclesiastical and civil revolution. On to edifices which reflected the characteristics of an age of architectural splendour and historic interest, they grafted monstrosities of their own devising, utterly at variance with everything but the taste of their own debased period, whilst, to make way for it, they obliterated what it should have been their first care to preserve, and the loss of which was irreparable.

No greater reflection could be cast upon the taste of the age than is contained in the fact that these vagaries of architects and churchwardens were endured without protest on the part of those by whom the culture of the time was represented. The characteristics of a feudal castle or

a religious retreat were attempted to be reproduced in stucco, and suburban villas sprang up in all directions with battlements of wood and pinnacles of plaster. Art education at this time must have been at a painfully low ebb when our architectural guides were so destitute of a sense of congruity, and so ready to perpetrate anachronisms of the grossest type. One can well conceive what would have happened to any architect who had designed a country residence for a mediæval nobleman on the lines of Horace Walpole's villa at Strawberry Hill, or to one who had submitted to a Tudor monarch the plans of a royal palace similar to the Brighton Pavilion. The sham Gothic in the one case, or the mock orientalism in the other, would certainly have been sufficient to relegate its author to the well-deserved obscurity from which he had temporarily emerged, even if it did not lead to worse consequences to him.

It is clear then that a Reformation movement was not a little needed, and it was at last forthcoming. There was an awakening, partial though it was, which showed itself in several ways, and, most notably, in the Gothic revival. A new school of architects uprose, represented by such men as Rickman and Pugin, who, possessing a knowledge and a scholarly appreciation of the principles underlying real Gothic, sought to educate the public taste to a love of the genuine in place of the spurious. The movement was, however, mainly ecclesiastical in its object. It may be said to have joined hands with the High Church movement of the early Victorian era, which was cradled at Oxford, and which embraced among its other aims that of restoring to the Church the advantages which, in former times, it derived from the utilization in its service of painting, sculpture, music and kindred arts in their highest conceptions. But the influence of this revival was not confined to the Church, for it gave an impetus to the rising tendency towards more enlightened views with regard to taste in general and mediæval art in particular. It resembled the *Æsthetic* movement of later days, of which it may be considered the direct precursor, inasmuch as it was an organized effort to reduce to practice the art-theories of an

influential section of the community. Beyond this, the Gothic revival, by its educational effects, by its recognition of the utility of art in a spiritual sense, and by its fostering care of art traditions of a noble order, did much to pave the way for succeeding efforts.

The Gothic style in its various developments is pre-eminently ecclesiastical, and does not readily lend itself to the requirements of nineteenth-century householders, who live under different social and domestic conditions from those applying to their mediæval ancestors. The latter attached less importance than we do to light and air in dwellings, and were content to sit on Glastonbury chairs or wooden stools without much regard to bodily ease. So the Gothic revival, which could not dispense with certain Gothic discomforts, naturally made more headway in the Church than in the home. The *Æsthetes* of the Mid-Victorian period, who followed the Revivalists, identified themselves more especially with the Queen Anne style of architecture, which certainly is more adapted to the domiciliary wants of the ordinary Englishman. Some evidence of this is found in the fact that the chief promoters of the Queen Anne style, in almost every instance, began their architectural career in the school of the Gothic revival. Oxford was identified with the three art movements of the Victorian period: the Gothic, the Pre-Raphaelite, and the *Æsthetic*. This will account for my hearing more about them than I should otherwise have done, and, although I was not brought into contact with the shining Pre-Raphaelite lights, I heard a good deal about them through visitors at my father's house who were interested in the movement. Among these was William Riviere—the father of Mr. Briton Riviere, R.A.—a painter of repute, who, having settled in Oxford, joined Rossetti, Burne-Jones, William Morris, and others in the production of the famous but ill-fated frescoes, illustrating Arthurian legends, which, so long as they lasted, decorated the walls of the Debating Hall, now the Library, of the University Union.

Of these, Riviere contributed three, Morris two, and the rest one each. The artists carried out their work with enthusiastic impetuosity, but, unfortunately, with but a

limited knowledge of the conditions upon which the permanency of fresco work in our climate depended. The walls were not properly prepared for paintings of this description, and so in course of time—and not a very long time either—these interesting examples of the art of the period became, through fading and scaling, mere wrecks of their former selves; hence there is little joy in them now. I have a very charming memento of William Riviere in the shape of an oil painting, entitled *The Charity Girl*, which is such a delightfully cheery composition that it is always an incentive to look upon the bright side of things. It is also endeared to me by the thought that it was the foundation of my little picture-gallery. I bought it at an auction sale of Riviere's pictures after his death, because the painter had been to me as a boy a most attractive personality and also because the picture itself made a strong appeal to my imagination. It was the first picture of any consequence that I acquired after setting up house-keeping, and it was a matter of serious debate with me as to whether such an expenditure could be justified. With the halo of sentiment surrounding the little charity girl, I would not part with her now for much more than she cost me.

Whilst new influences were bearing fruit, old-fashioned orthodoxy in painting was suddenly shocked by the appearance in its midst of a small band of young enthusiasts, who had the temerity to cast down the altars which the high-priests of art had set up in order that they might worship at the shrine of Nature only. The story of this uprising is full of dramatic interest, but I must confine myself to a brief reference to its leading incidents.

In 1848 three young men, John Everett Millais, William Holman Hunt, and Dante Gabriel Rossetti, were studying at the same time in the Royal Academy School. Kindred sympathies brought them into relationship, and together they pored over a book of engravings of the frescoes in the Campo Santo at Pisa. They drew inspiration from its pages, and fancied that they had discovered a starting point for their art in the works of the Early Italian Masters.

They embarked upon a crusade against the conventionalities and traditions of the antique and academic styles, and rebelled against the canons of art they had been taught to reverence. It must have required no little courage and unbounded audacity to proclaim a creed that involved a denial of so much that was held sacred. The penalty of unorthodoxy soon overtook them in the storm of condemnation and ridicule which burst over their devoted heads.

The most famous of the caricatures directed against the new movement was a very clever and pointed piece of pictorial satire by Frederick Sandys, the painter. At the Royal Academy of 1857 Millais exhibited a picture, *Sir Isumbras at the Ford*, painted in his Pre-Raphaelite manner, which attracted a good deal of attention. It represented a knight on horseback taking across the ford on his saddle two little children, one a girl in front of him and the other a boy clinging to him behind, whilst two nuns are observing them from the bank. In the caricature, described as *A Nightmare*, Millais is depicted as the knight and Rossetti and Hunt as the two children clinging to him, while the charger is transformed into a donkey with "J. R., Oxon."—standing for John Ruskin, who, metaphorically, took the Pre-Raphaelites on his back when the attackers were on their heels—branded on its hindquarters. The nuns on the bank, with another added, are in the likeness of Michael Angelo, Raphael, and Titian, attached to whom is a scroll with "Ora pro nobis" on it. Some mock mediæval verses appear at the foot of the caricature, signed Thomas le Tailleur, in allusion to Tom Taylor, who had the credit of writing some lines accompanying the original painting upon which the caricature was founded.

Only three hundred copies of this audacious pictorial parody were printed, which were soon caught up by artists and others, and when there was a general demand for more neither the printer nor the plate could be discovered, and they have never been heard of since. As the Pre-Raphaelites passed out of ken, so also did most of the copies of the caricature, which became extremely scarce and difficult to obtain at any price. I had long desired a copy to add to my collection of illustrations of Victorian movements,



A NIGHTMARE  
*Reproduction of a Caricature by F. Sandys of Millais' "Sir Isumbras at the Ford"*



when one day, not very long ago, I found it well-framed in a sale-room, and, as no one seemed to appreciate its import, it was knocked down to me, frame and all, for seven and sixpence.

Undaunted, however, by the hostility they encountered, and which they must have anticipated, the three set to work to promulgate the new creed, and in this they were joined by Thomas Woolner, sculptor and poet; Fred. Geo. Stephens, painter and art critic; James Collinson, painter and poet; and William Michael Rossetti, art critic and a younger brother of Dante Gabriel Rossetti. They were not, when all told, very formidable in point of numbers, but this was somewhat compensated for by a plenitude of enthusiasm. These seven ardent spirits, full of the confidence which youth begets, banded themselves together to regenerate art under the adopted title of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood.

The keynote of their belief was the intimate relationship of one art with another. They sought to unite under one banner the poet, the painter, and the critic, who were to work in harmonious conjunction for a common end, instead of in isolated groups. This was exemplified in the seven composing the fraternity, most of whom were included in it in a dual capacity. It was the adoption of this principle, which was equally the distinguishing characteristic of those who later on followed in their footsteps, that specially entitle the Pre-Raphaelites to be considered as the first of the *Æsthetes*, as the followers of a succeeding art-movement were termed—that is to say, the first who put their ideas into a definite shape and combined to carry them out. Blake, the artist and poet, and others have also been claimed as *Æsthetes*, but they were rather isolated instances of art-developments tending in a similar direction.

The leading spirit of the Brotherhood, who was mainly responsible for the shaping of its course, was the elder Rossetti. The fraternity never consisted of more than the seven members already named, although it had sympathizers with its objects outside its ranks, among them being Ford Madox Brown, William Bell Scott, Arthur Hughes, and Thomas Seddon. In fact, Madox Brown was actually

painting on the Pre-Raphaelites' lines before the latter were heard of.

William Michael Rossetti, who is entitled to speak on their behalf, thus explains the choice by the Brotherhood of their title :

"The painters before Raphael had worked in often more than partial ignorance of the positive rules of art, and unaffected by conventional rules. These were not known in their days, and they neither invented nor discovered them. It is to the latter fact, and not the former, that the adoption of the name 'Pre-Raphaelites' by the artists in question is to be ascribed."

The Brotherhood started a periodical, which they entitled the *Germ*, and further described it as being "thoughts towards Nature in Literature, Poetry and Art." It was edited by William Michael Rossetti, and has a claim to consideration on account of the after-eminence of its contributors. Its life, however, was but a short one, lasting only a few months and being represented by four one-shilling numbers. The substantial rewards of Fame came to it, as is too often the case in this world, after death, for copies have been sold in later times for more pounds than they originally cost shillings.

If violent criticism and a plentiful use of newspaper invective could have annihilated the intrepid seven they would have speedily succumbed. At the moment, however, that they most needed assistance it was at hand, for John Ruskin, who had already, by his *Stones of Venice*, earned a right to be listened to, threw himself into the fray and energetically defended the exponents of the new school. He was not content to remain merely on the defensive, but with characteristic spirit and impetuosity he carried the war into the enemies' country, and made a vigorous onslaught upon the supporters of the old faith. The championship of so able a critic as Ruskin undoubtedly did much to stem the tide that was running so fiercely against the Brotherhood. He said of Pre-Raphaelitism that it had "but one principle, that of absolute uncompromising truth in all that it does, obtained by working everything, down to the most minute detail, from Nature and from

Nature only. Or where imagination is necessarily trusted to, by always endeavouring to conceive a fact as it really was likely to have happened, rather than it most prettily might have happened. Every Pre-Raphaelite landscape background is painted to the last touch, in the open air, from the thing itself. Every Pre-Raphaelite figure, however studied in expression, is a true portrait of some living person. Every minute accessory is painted in the same manner."

It was this spirit of uncompromising fidelity to nature, referred to by Ruskin, which induced Holman Hunt, when he painted his picture, *The Scapegoat*, to live for months in a tent on the borders of the Dead Sea, exposed to a pestilential air and in utter solitude.

The outcry which had been raised when the Pre-Raphaelites first dared to cross swords with orthodoxy gradually moderated as the strength of their primary contention gained recognition, and the little band of reformers, having vindicated their position, soon ceased to exist as a Brotherhood. It was at best but a frail bond that united them, for their temperaments and general sympathies were very diverse, and it was no commingling of congenial spirits except in a very restricted sense.

Millais abandoned those mannerisms which were at first supposed to be inseparable from the new school, and was afterwards looked upon by certain high-art apostles as a renegade who had turned his back upon himself. He elected to go down to posterity as a representative of English Nineteenth Century Art rather than that of Early Italian revivalism, and to produce pictures for the million instead of for the select few. One saw in the great exhibition of his pictures, embracing every period of his work, held at the Grosvenor Gallery in 1886, that Pre-Raphaelitism in its early accentuated form had given place to conceptions, whether of form or colour, of so much charm as to appeal directly to all with whom a sense of beauty was not an unknown quantity. His portraits, as painted in his later manner, breathed the very spirit of life, in the fidelity with which they reproduced the outward and visible characteristics of the individual represented, and in their

remarkable suggestiveness of all that lay beneath the surface. His magnificent portrait of Gladstone, so full of breath and dignity, is a conspicuous example of this. I happen to be the happy possessor of the original letter, written by Millais and addressed to Mrs. Gladstone, in which the artist craves a final sitting for the famous portrait. As the epistle links together three such imperishable names as "the Apelles" of the Victorian era; the statesman whose dazzling brilliancy lit up the politics of his day; and the guardian angel, whose devoted care and companionship went far to enable "the old Parliamentary hand" to fulfil his high destiny, my readers may be sufficiently interested in its terms as to justify its inclusion here; so I give it:

"8, Palace Gate, Kensington.

"18th January, '85.

"DEAR MRS. GLADSTONE,

"Now that I hear Mr. Gladstone is better, I venture to ask just one other hour's sitting when it is quite convenient.

"I know he is in town as I write, but I will not trouble him with a note when I know he has so much to think of. When he comes to town next time, you might mention it to him.

"I am painting two; one for Lord Rosebery and the other for Christ Church, otherwise I would not have required another look.

"With my kind regards,

"Believe me, very truly yours,

"JOHN EVERETT MILLAIS."

Of Millais, Gladstone once said to Stuart Wortley, the artist: "I never saw such power of concentration in any man. I don't think I was in his studio for that portrait more than five hours and a half altogether."

Rossetti retired from exhibiting in public, and, as most of his pictures passed into private hands, the outside world knows more of him as a poet than a painter, though there is a fine example of his style, *The Annunciation*, in the National Gallery.

Woolner went to the Gold Fields, and remained abroad for some years, furnishing, on his return, the best proof of his orthodoxy by becoming Professor of Sculpture at the Royal Academy. To the last all he did was distinguished by the conscientious thoroughness characteristic of the school to which he originally attached himself, and this is true alike of his sculpture and his poetry, both of which have qualities that will long endure.

Holman Hunt alone of the Brotherhood can be quoted as an example of entire faithfulness to its original traditions, and he gave some proof of his devotion to them by declining an honour that most would covet, that of membership of the Royal Academy. No school, however, could ever be counted insignificant that numbered the painter of *The Light of the World* among its adherents.

The world, generally, has written down the Pre-Raphaelite movement as a failure, under the impression that its effects were as evanescent as its early mannerisms. Undoubtedly it had conspicuous weaknesses, but it is possible to appreciate the main idea—the breaking down of artificial barriers and the guiding principle of fidelity to Nature—without going into raptures over the methods of application. The rejection of principles of composition based upon centuries of experience seems to have been attempted by the Pre-Raphaelites in too wholesale a fashion, whilst an uncompromising adherence to Nature too often resulted in the substitution of literal ugliness for imaginative beauty. A microscopic minuteness, as enabled an expert to identify the species of every blade of grass in a pictured field, was certainly, in a sense, true to Nature, but it argued the possession of optical advantages on the part of the spectator not vouchsafed to ordinary mortals. Then, too, a tendency to an excess of symbolism and an intensity of sentiment were often prejudicial to effective pictorial expression. Ruskin, with all his admiration for the school, was not blind to the last-named weakness, and he likened a painter in whose pictures it is apparent to a youth expressing his earnest feeling by feeble verse, under the impression that it must be good because he *means* so much by it.

But, after making the most of Pre-Raphaelite weaknesses, the net result of the movement was a clear gain to Art. By striking out a path for themselves, the Pre-Raphaelites showed that the beaten track was not the only road by which art could be approached, and in so doing they smoothed the future for those who aspired to be something more than followers in a common ruck. The aggressiveness of style, in which the Brotherhood first delighted, was softened and toned down by time, and the "give and take" principle, which moulds so many theories into a workable shape, has been exemplified in this case by the union, in many of the best paintings of later times, of qualities which were at first supposed to be the exclusive possession of one side or the other.

So ends the first act of the Æsthetic drama. Pre-Raphaelitism, as originally formulated, fell into the background, and another form of Æstheticism, based upon the old, but revised and amplified, as regards its articles of faith, took its place.

## CHAPTER XXII

The *Æsthetes*—The Philosophers—The Poets—The Painters—The Grosvenor Gallery—Whistler.

IN the seventies, the term "æsthetic"—the use of which had until then been extremely limited—asserted itself in conversational circles to which it had hitherto been a stranger. Special circumstances brought it into prominence, but it mainly owed its general popularity to the fact that it was the crystallization of a prevailing idea, the verbal embodiment of the fashion of the hour. Many who failed to grasp its full significance delighted in a term which, to them, had much of the charm of novelty with a flavour of art culture in addition. Certain others, who were under the impression that they had had art revelations not vouchsafed to ordinary mortals, found infinite comfort in its use, inasmuch as it had an environment of mysticism which only *they* could penetrate and a depth of meaning which only they could fathom.

Appealing then, as it did, to the imagination of the many, who had but a limited conception of the ideas which it was intended to convey, as well as to that of the comparative few, who were happy in the consciousness of their own enlightenment, it is not altogether surprising that it was welcomed as an acceptable addition to the limited vocabulary of everyday life.

When the term "æsthetic" lost some of its exclusiveness, and was found in association with verbal expressions of a very ordinary type, it brought in its train a goodly company of attendant parts of speech. At all social gatherings having any pretensions to intellectuality, such terms as "culture," "high art" and "intensity" came to the conversational surface and basked in the sun of a new-found popularity. Years ago we used the term "art";

without any attempt to emphasize its importance by a prefix. Then we began to talk of "fine art," and then came "high art," and the latest is "the new art." The verbal advent of "high art" was one of the outward and visible signs of a movement in our midst, having for its object nothing less than the regeneration of art in its every aspect.

This movement, from small beginnings, developed a sufficient importance to be taken under the fostering wings of fashion, which is equivalent to saying that it became the spoilt child of the hour, petted and caressed whilst the fit of effusiveness lasted, and discarded in due course by a fickle public when a new love superseded the old. Those who were "in" as well as those who were "out of" what is known as "Society," and those who had more taste than money, as well as those who had more money than taste, were, as far as the upper and middle classes were concerned, alike affected by it. Votaries of the cult were rejoicing in the dawn of a new Renaissance, and congratulating the world upon the rediscovery of the Beautiful. The sunflower was in the height of its bloom, and the blue-china craze in the zenith of its glory.

Even those who desired to maintain a passive neutrality were compelled to recognize the influence of the new doctrine in their midst, for it was everywhere in evidence; in fact, as an incentive to conversation, it was almost as useful a subject as the state of the weather. The shops, the theatres, the newspapers and the magazines all paid tribute to the fascinations of the social topic of the hour, which was summed up in the all-embracing title—The *Æsthetic Movement*.

Events move quickly in a high-pressure age, and nowadays we welcome the coming ere we have fairly speeded the parting sensation of the hour. The latest claimant for the ear of the public treads so closely upon the heels of its predecessor that the footprints of the latter are liable to be obliterated almost before the echoes of its voice have died away. So it happens that a movement which exercised the powers of the controversialists, the idealists, the satirists and the conversationalists of the day, and may be said to

have been a boon to one and all of them, has already all but passed into the limbo of forgetfulness. Its records are of a scattered and fragmentary character, and are mainly to be found in the pages of newspapers and periodicals, or in a piecemeal form as biographical references.

The accident of living on a spot closely associated with the movement enabled me to obtain some first-hand experiences of it. Yet though the memories which encircle this movement are growing dim, its influence upon the artistic, social and domestic life of the community was very distinctly marked at the time, and its traces are far from being yet obliterated. As an embodiment of an art-faith, it was hailed as a heaven-sent offspring by one section, and jeered at as a misshaped abortion by another. And, though the clang of arms and the shouts of the combatants have subsided, the widest divergence of opinion is still found to exist, if ever an attempt is made to reopen the old controversy and to measure its effects.

The Mission of the Victorian Century *Æsthetes* was to inculcate a love for the Beautiful. This seems, at first sight, a very simple creed, and one to which little exception could be taken. But there is an old saying that "Every eye makes its own beauty," and as long as this holds good there will always be a rallying-point for contending factions. The *Æsthetes* took upon themselves to settle what constituted beauty, and they considered that they were qualified to be the arbiters of this, on the ground that they had educated themselves up to a higher point, artistically, than the rest of the world had attained to, and that their perceptions were acuter and their tastes more refined in consequence. Those who did not accept their rulings and subscribe to the various articles of belief in which the principles of this new philosophy of art and life were laid down were considered to be outside the pale, and only to be fitly described as "Philistines." It was a gospel of peace to all outward appearance, but it contained, in its dogmatic assertiveness, the elements of war. Nor was there any lack of combativeness on the part either of those who preached or those who rejected it.

A study of the Beautiful, as a branch of knowledge,

was no new thing. Long before Æstheticism came into vogue as one of the fashions of the day, the Beautiful had been the subject of speculative discussion with many a philosopher. The literature of the subject, in the shape of scientific dissertations, is voluminous. It extends over many years, and England, France and Germany are foremost among the nations who have contributed to it. One writer after another has theorized and argued as to the origin of the sense of beauty, how it is evolved, in what it consists, and the laws that govern it. They have discussed the subject in its metaphysical, psychological, physiological, emotional and every other purely academic aspect, and they will probably continue to do so to the end of time. The materials are the same, but a shake of the philosophical kaleidoscope rearranges them, and they do duty once again as a new and original theory satisfactorily accounting for everything. After a study of these manifold theories, one is inclined to re-echo the words of the Persian poet who wrote :

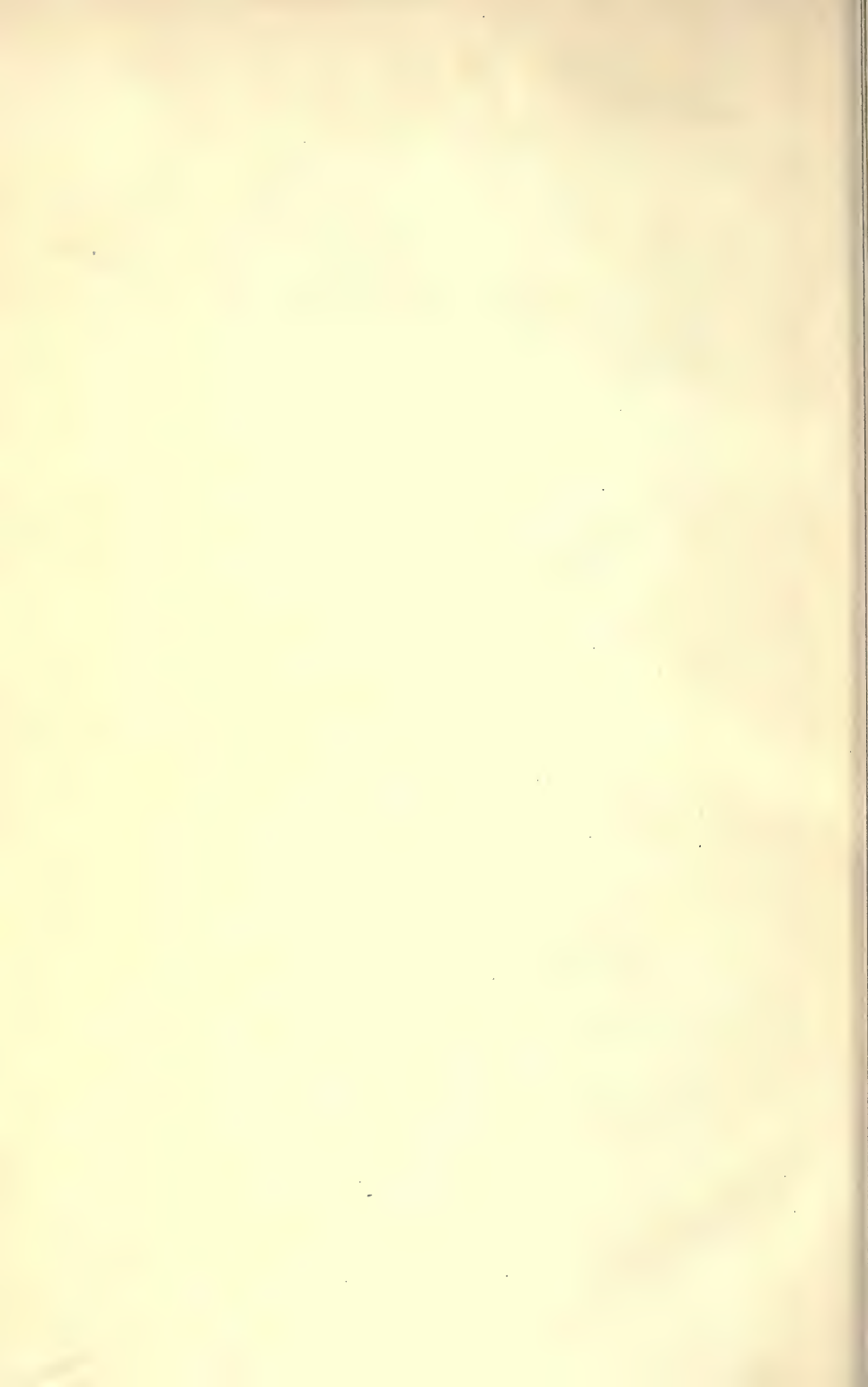
“ Myself, when young, did eagerly frequent  
Doctor and saint, and heard great argument  
About it and about ; but evermore  
Came out by the same door where in I went.”

The Æsthetes, although they philosophized, on occasion, did not, at any rate, confine themselves to the region of speculation, but endeavoured to reduce their theories to practice. My main object in referring at all to the philosophers, pure and simple, is to remove a not uncommon impression that the formulation of the theories of Æsthetes was the result of a comparatively new study arising out of a latter-day movement, whereas, in point of fact, it was originated long anterior to the development of such movement.

Oxford, which had been so closely identified with the Gothic revival, had some part also in the story of these later phases of art life. Dante Gabriel Rossetti was educated at the University, and designed and executed one of the frescoes in the Debating Hall of the University Union. Millais was a frequent visitor to the city, and painted some frescoes in its Masonic Hall. Woolner



AN OXFORD PRÆ-RAPHAELITE PORTRAIT OF D. G. ROSSETTI  
*Reproduced, by permission of Mr. H. Giles, from a drawing*



contributed a statue to the University Museum. Holman Hunt often visited Oxford and painted there, and his masterpiece was purchased for £10,000 by Mr. Thomas Coombe, a member of the University, and partner in the Clarendon Press. It was bequeathed by him to Keble College, where it finds a fitting resting-place. John Ruskin, the champion of Pre-Raphaelitism, was a student of Christ Church, and afterwards held the Slade Professorship of Art in the University.

But Oxford had a still further hand in the making of Æsthetes, and could claim as her children the leading spirits of the later movement. Included in this second group were the following Oxford men: Algernon Charles Swinburne, E. Burne-Jones, William Morris and W. Pater, all of whom were undergraduates at one and the same time. They fell under the influence of Rossetti, who was then engaged on the Union frescoes, and his presence on the scene supplied a connecting link between Pre-Raphaelitism and its new embodiment. Morris afterwards articulated himself to G. Street, the architect, who had offices at Oxford; he found his future wife in that city, and he and Burne-Jones further identified themselves with it by joining Rossetti in the execution of the Union frescoes. A desire to regenerate many things, and art in particular, was the bond that united the party, and under this banner many others enrolled themselves.

The correlation of the arts and a veneration for the works of the Early Italian School were, as they had been with the Pre-Raphaelites, leading articles of faith. Like their predecessors, the later Æsthetes had their organ, and this was represented by the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*. The life of University serials is proverbially brief, and this was no exception to the rule, for a year covered the term of its existence. In that time, however, several of the best-known of the poets of the Æsthetic school made their debut in it.

In after years, the believers in a unity of the arts ventilated their views in a periodical publication, which they christened the *Hobby Horse*, and William Bell Scott, who was among the poetical contributors to the *Germ*,

supplied the connecting link between the old *Æstheticism* and the new by similarly identifying himself with the *Hobby Horse*.

The movement, although making gradual progress, was at first confined to a very limited circle. Not having yet attained to the position of a fashion, its influence on the general public was unappreciable. In due course, the University career of its apostles came to a close, and their setting forth into the larger world of work was followed by a wider promulgation of the ideas which had been generated at Oxford.

The scheme of reformation, as ultimately developed, was much more extensive in its aims than its predecessor, for little came amiss to it. The remodelling of taste, in general, as displayed in our houses, our pictures, our decorations, our furniture, our books, our attire, our conversation and our manners, was the task of the new regenerators. This was, as the Yankees say, "a large order." I do not, however, mean to convey that all this was embodied in the original programme, but it resembled some others, political and otherwise, in its capacity for absorbing any special fad that was drifting about.

The painters were in the forefront of the Pre-Raphaelite movement, but now the poets were to be conspicuous.

Rossetti and Swinburne were leading representatives of the poetical school affected by the *Æsthetes*. Although each possessed certain distinct individualities, which are by this time well understood, each had characteristics which, in a greater or less degree, were common to both and specially typical of the school. Speaking generally, *Æsthetic* poets pitched their voices in a minor key, and their thoughts were usually expressed in a pessimistic vein. They delighted in out-of-the-way phrases and archaisms, and everything that savoured of quaintness.

The amatory or erotic sentiment was often unpleasantly prominent, and love in its physical aspects was unduly dwelt upon. Pallid maidens in clinging gowns were always being loved with a fervour of ecstasy, and were themselves consumed by a hopeless passion which never seemed to lead to matrimony. It must be added, too, that the moral

and religious susceptibilities of the average Englishman were too often unnecessarily trampled upon. The lesser poetic lights of Æstheticism affected the style without the redeeming qualities of their superiors, and too often dealt in sickly sentiment and verbal obscurities. Taking count of certain features predominant in Æsthetic poetry, it cannot be said that the Philistine definition of it as the "Fleshly School" was altogether undeserved.

Morris was rather a poet and an Æsthete than an Æsthetic poet, for his verse has not the peculiarities referred to in any marked degree. His poems are full of dramatic power and fertile descriptiveness, with a strong flavour of Socialism. In the region of Phantasy he can hardly be excelled, and the knights of the Middle Ages, in all their panoply of war, live again in his pages. Rossetti could be a sweet singer when his melodiousness was not overpowered by the moanings of despair. Swinburne, having sown his poetical wild oats, ceased to shock national instincts. Even the *Times* allowed that he was "on the side of the angels," and a place is accorded him, by universal consent, in the foremost rank of modern poets.

Among dead poets, Keats, Blake, Shelley and Coleridge represented the taste of the Æsthetes, and some of the latter went so far as to persuade themselves that Gray, Wordsworth, Byron and Scott could only flutter round the base of Parnassus while the first-named were soaring to its heights.

The critics and satirists soon found a congenial field for the exercise of their talents in the poetry of Æstheticism, and Robert Buchanan, who was a poet and novelist of no mean order himself, was foremost in attacking it. Under the signature of "Caliban," he contributed to the *Spectator* of September 15th, 1866, some very smartly written verses entitled "The Session of the Poets." It was descriptive of a meeting of the poets of the day, supposed to be held under the chairmanship of Tennyson. The poem is very rarely met with now, and as it is so brilliant a specimen of satiric humour, I cannot refrain from giving the following quotation from it. After describing those who were present, the writer proceeds :

“What was said ? what was done ? was there prosing or rhyming ?  
 Was nothing noteworthy in deed or in word ?  
 Why, just as the hour for the supper was chiming,  
 The only event of the evening occurred.  
 Up jumped, with his neck stretching out like a gander,  
 Master Swinburne, and squeal’d glaring out through his hair :  
 ‘All Virtue is bosh ! Hallelujah for Landor !  
 I disbelieve wholly in everything !—there !’

“With language so awful he dared then to treat ’em—  
 Miss Ingelow fainted in Tennyson’s arms,  
 Poor Arnold rush’d out, crying ‘*Sæcl’ inficetum !*’  
 And great bards and small bards were full of alarms ;  
 Till Tennyson, flaming and red as a gipsy,  
 Struck his fist on the table and uttered a shout ;  
 ‘To the door with the boy ! Call a cab ! He is tipsy !’  
 And they carried the naughty young gentleman out.

“After that, all the pleasanter talking was done there—  
 Whoever had known such an insult before ?  
 The Chairman tried hard to rekindle the fun there,  
 But the Muses were shocked and the pleasure was o’er.  
 Then ‘Ah !’ cried the Chairman, ‘this teaches me knowledge,  
 The future shall find me more wise by the powers !  
 This comes of assigning to yonkers from college  
 Too early a place in such meetings as ours !’”

Buchanan afterwards made a fierce attack, in the *Contemporary Review*, in October, 1871, upon the poems of Rossetti, in an article entitled “The Fleshly School of Poetry,” signed “Thomas Maitland.” Rossetti, in the *Athenæum* replied to this with considerable effect. He showed that he had been misrepresented by extracts taken apart from the context, and that inferences as to his meaning had been drawn without adequate justification. Sidney Colvin took up the cudgels on behalf of Rossetti, others mingled in the fray, and an acrimonious correspondence was the result. It is due to Buchanan to say that, in after years, he retracted his charges and made honourable amends.

Up to this time the *Æsthetes* had figured in a paper war merely, but more serious hostilities were to come. In 1875, an anonymous poem was published, entitled “Jonas Fisher,” which was a fiercer onslaught than ever upon the *Æsthetic* poets, and, being very much in accord with Buchanan’s known sentiments, it was put down to his pen. The *Examiner*, having credited him with it, published an anonymous letter, which, on the assumption that he was the author of the poem, attacked him in the strongest

possible terms. This resulted in Buchanan's bringing an action against the *Examiner* for libel. In the course of the trial, it transpired that the real author of the poem was the Earl of Southesk, and the writer of the anonymous letter was Swinburne. Considering the freedom with which Buchanan had attacked others, his sensitiveness seems a little unnatural, especially as his own poems, as the counsel for the defence pointed out, were not entirely free from the characteristics he objected to in those of others. However, the jury solaced his wounded feelings by awarding him £150 damages.

Whilst the poets were enjoying a certain notoriety, the painters of the same school were by no means idle, and many canvases were peopled with pale and distraught maidens, with tousled locks, and faces full of the sad weariness of love-lorn languor. Morbid melancholy was as predominant in the works of the *Æsthetic* painters as in those of the poets. There was the same tendency to look upon the darker side of life, and to accentuate its shadows. Humanity was too often represented as gaunt and sallow-visaged, as though a robust constitution, typified by the bloom of health, was inconsistent with true art. The nearest approaches to beauty were of a wistful, sorrowful kind, indicating a smothered discontent with things in general, suggestive of a household where the washing is done at home. Of course, there were exceptions to this, but this was the prevailing spirit of such paintings.

The genius of the rank and file did not make amends for this peculiarity, but in the case of such a leading light as Burne-Jones, magnificent colouring and inventive power were sufficient in themselves to compel admiration, although twenty years ago, some eminent critics said of this artist that he was "no draughtsman," and described his work as "amateurish." Burne-Jones, heeding them not, painted on in his own way, and the wisdom of such a course was amply vindicated.

Art would certainly have been much the poorer without the spirituality of Rossetti or the combination of beauty, poetry and refinement of Burne-Jones. There should be room in its realms for the romanticism of such workers

as these as well as for those of a more robust and popular school. Burne-Jones laboured in many departments of the applied arts, and in the designing of stained-glass windows, especially, did much to effect a greatly needed reformation. A beautiful and very early example of his work in this direction is represented by the large east window of the Latin Chapel in Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford, which, executed in 1859, marked an epoch in glass painting. Its superiority, both in design and colour, over the debased period type of window, which, by its pooriness of conception and flamboyant glare, was so entirely of "the earth, earthy," soon attracted attention. The commissions which followed ultimately led to the formation of the firm of William Morris and Co., in which Burne-Jones at the onset had an interest, and which, as will be seen later on, had so marked an influence upon the taste in art of the time.

The correlation-of-the-arts theory was practically illustrated in the persons of several of the professors of the cult, who worked in the twofold capacity of critics as well as either painters or poets. Much mutual admiration was the natural result of this. The painter would take his subject from the works of the poet, and the latter, as a critic, went into ecstasies over the pictorial embodiment of his own poem. Next, the poet would illustrate in verse the depth and meaning of the symbolism which was the strong point of the painter, and the latter then took up the running, and, as a critic, rhapsodized in print over the genius of the poet. All which, as Mr. Pepys would say, was "very diverting."

A local habitation was soon the want of the *Æsthetes*; one in which their particular idiosyncrasies could be brought under special notice.

The atmosphere of staid respectability and sedate orthodoxy which was associated with the Royal Academy was felt by some of the high-priests of the cult to be oppressive to them, and, although the acknowledged excellence of their work would have secured a place for it on its walls, they disdained the distinction. On the other hand, many of the lesser lights of the same school would

have put up with uncongenial surroundings for the sake of admission into academic company, if only their pictures had been sufficiently to the taste of the Hanging Committee to allow of it.

If a want is created, means are usually found nowadays to supply it. A head-quarters for a certain style of art was called for, and, in 1870, Sir Coutts Lindsay, who was himself an artist and a scholarly and cultivated critic, was the good genius who, by the power of his purse, brought it into existence under the name of the Grosvenor Gallery. Not that it is to be assumed that the Gallery was intended for the exclusive benefit of one particular school, for its stated object was to provide a home for the best and most intellectual art of the day, without restriction to style. As a matter of fact, however, it was *par excellence*, the exhibition-ground of the Æsthetes, and this was clearly manifest from the first ; in fact, by providing a spot where kindred spirits could forgather, and the eyes of the public could be focused upon them, it did much to stimulate the fashion that was setting in. Artists did not, as at Burlington House, have to run the gauntlet of a Hanging Committee, but a comparatively select few, including those who wouldn't and those who couldn't enter the portals of the older institution, were invited to contribute their works. Much éclat attended the starting of the new temple of art, and it began to be said that the Royal Academy was an antiquated institution that was getting played out, and that its youthful contemporary must be the future medium for infusing fresh life into art. The result supplies one more example of Fate's irony, for the Royal Academy still pursues the even tenor of its way, with unruffled serenity and a flourishing exchequer, whilst the Grosvenor Gallery is numbered with the things of the past.

Among the painters whom the Grosvenor Gallery brought into special prominence was that eccentric genius, James MacNiel Whistler. He was an Æsthete of an altogether distinct type from those we have been discussing. His etchings were accorded a place of honour upon the walls of Æsthetic homes, and there was a mutual sympathy between himself and disciples of the cult, arising out of

the fact that both he and they were warring against the powers that represented established authority in art, but it could not be said that his paintings were generally of the accepted Æsthetic type. He acted, however, upon the Æsthetic theory of the correlation of the arts by borrowing the phraseology of music for the nomenclature of his pictures. These he described as nocturnes, harmonies, scherzos, symphonies, arrangements, etc., and this piece of singularity, or, as some preferred to call it, affectation, was adopted by many imitators of his peculiar style. In those early days of the Impressionists, Whistler earned considerable notoriety by his method of painting, which elicited much admiration from those who comprehended it, and the very reverse from the many who did not. As a subject impressed itself upon his mind at the moment he transferred it to canvas, and a few touches sufficed to convey to himself exactly what he meant. Unfortunately, the meaning was not equally apparent to the uninitiated, and there was often considerable doubt as to what was intended. This was amusingly satirized in a piece produced at one of the London theatres at this time. A picture, entitled *A Dual Harmony*, and said to be by "an artist of the future," was exhibited on the stage. This picture, when it was one side up, represented an azure sea overlooked by a burning sky, and, when it was held the other way up, it was an azure sky overlooking a sandy desert.

Outsiders could watch these new art developments in painting with no stronger feeling than that of bewildered amusement. The foremost of art-prophets could not view them with corresponding equanimity, and the champion of Pre-Raphaelitism took Whistler to task in a style that did not err on the side of leniency. In a criticism on a picture, or a nocturne, as it was termed, entitled *A Falling Rocket*, exhibited by Whistler at the Grosvenor Gallery, Ruskin, in *Fors Clavigera*, said :

"For Mr. Whistler's own sake, no less than for the protection of the purchaser, Sir Coutts Lindsay ought not to have admitted works into the Gallery in which the ill-educated conceit of the artist so nearly approached the aspect of wilful imposture. I have seen and heard much of

Cockney impudence before now, but never expected to hear a coxcomb ask 200 guineas for flinging a pot of paint in the public's face."

Upon this Whistler brought an action for damages on the ground that this was an attack upon his personal character not justified by the picture in question, which, though painted rapidly, was the result of conscientious labour. The most amusing feature in the case was the conflict of professional evidence as to the merits, or otherwise, of Whistler's paintings. W. M. Rossetti, Albert Moore, and W. H. Wills testified in favour of the plaintiff, and Burne-Jones and Frith—a most curious conjunction—were brought up for the defence. A court of justice was by no means an ideal tribunal for such a cause, and the jury must have been sorely puzzled. The verdict may be taken as an expression on the part of both judge and jury of an inability to settle a point upon which the artistic world was hopelessly divided. The jury awarded the plaintiff a farthing damages, and Baron Huddleston, the judge, by an exercise of his own discretion, gave judgment without costs, leaving each side to pay his own. The verdict of the outside public may be said to have been adverse to both parties to the suit, as it amounted to a deprecation equally of Whistler's paintings and Ruskin's language. It must be remembered of Whistler that he has painted portraits in which the treatment is unexceptionable, and that in etching he had few rivals. He devised and executed a notable scheme of decoration for the dining-room of the late Mr. Leyland, the wealthy patron of *Æsthetic* art. It consisted in utilizing the brilliant plumage of the peacock for wall decoration, and for boldness and originality it has rarely been surpassed. It was a daring experiment, but the result was strikingly effective.

## CHAPTER XXIII

Home Decorations—William Morris—The Fine Old English Drawing-room—Æsthetic Costume—The Patrons—The Satirists—Oscar Wilde—The Fall of the Curtain—The Latest Craze—A Plea for Art for the People.

AS the Æsthetic movement progressed, its aims were enlarged and its influences were brought to bear upon matters of domestic interest as well as upon studio life. It was laid down that the Queen Anne style was the most fitting for an Englishman's house, and the interior decorations and ornaments of the house were taken in hand. And here, especially, it was that the ideas of the Æsthetes "caught on." Most people live in a house over which they have some control—at least their wives and daughters have, which is the main point—and Æstheticism in house furniture and decoration opened up a large and attractive field of operations. So, when once the advantages of this section of the movement had thoroughly permeated the upper and middle class mind, it flourished apace and went ahead rapidly.

Many persons, whose notions of art had been hitherto of a somewhat restrictive—not to say chaotic—type, began to have views and aspirations. They became possessed with a burning desire to revolutionize—in a decorative sense—the domestic hearth, and discoursed of the subtle beauties of pomegranate dados, sunflower friezes, Persian tiles, Venetian glass, and blue china. Those of a more advanced and imaginative school, the younger folk, to wit, who possessed in a special degree the characteristic known as "intensity," accorded a spiritual, as well as a utilitarian recognition to the outward embodiment of their faith, and, in stained-glass attitudes, dwelt lovingly upon what they called the "blessed and precious" in art and

"the dawn of the new renaissance." These, who sighed over the Philistinism of the age, and were full of soulful yearnings after the unattainable, were entitled to be classified as the full-blown species. Their reverential attitude toward such forms of crockery as they affected laid them open to the suggestion that a leading feature of their creed was the apotheosis of the teapot.

The emblazonment on their banner was "Art for art's sake," and this, literally translated, appeared to be that sense, motive and morals must give way if a previously defined sense of the beautiful demanded it. These were the unpractical searchers after beauty and all its works, who worshipped the mediæval, or, maybe, Japanese art, merely because it *was* mediæval or Japanese and not for its intrinsic value. They treated art very much as though it were an exotic to be kept in a hothouse of their own construction, where only the cultured few could gaze upon it.

These represented a type of Æsthete entitled to mention as one of other items in the life of the movement, but they are not to be taken as representing the majority. Wiser and more orthodox men than they have ere now forgotten that we live in a workaday world where art is only one of other forces which have also to be propitiated in the struggle for existence, and to exalt it as a divinity is to misapprehend the conditions under which the majority of the world is working out its destiny.

And this brings us to a personage of the story, William Morris, to whom what may be styled "the household decoration" phase of the movement owes almost everything. By his work in another direction his name has become familiarized to thousands of households that his *Earthly Paradise* had failed to penetrate. He it was who gave practical expression to the new-born desire of the modern householder to have his domestic surroundings more artistically fit and harmonious than they had hitherto been. In conjunction with Burne-Jones and other Æsthetes he started an establishment in London for the designing and manufacture of wallpapers, stained glass, ornamental tiles, and household decorations generally.

Here again is another illustration of the Æsthetic theory of the intimate connection of one art with another, for there was hardly a single department of the applied arts in which these two workers did not labour either directly or in the furnishing of designs for others to execute. Poetic sentiment was united with the artistic instinct, and an intimate knowledge of art, in an archæological sense, was a security against the perpetration of such anachronisms as distinguished the modern upholsterer. The beauty and consistency of the productions of the firm came to be gradually acknowledged, and the natural result of success, namely imitation, followed, for other firms had to recognize an increasing demand for something artistically better than that which they had been in the habit of supplying.

Until comparatively recent times taste in art was looked upon as the appanage of the rich and leisured classes of the community. By virtue of their means and position they were considered to be entitled to gratifying this propensity to the full, while the rest of the world were content to gaze upon its results without feeling that beyond this they had any part or lot in them. To them art was labelled with the stand-off injunction—"admire but touch not." To old-fashioned middle-class folk art was synonymous with luxury, and luxury meant extravagance, which, of course, people of limited means had best avoid. A cultivation of the sense of beauty tended, as they thought, to distract attention from the serious concerns of life and its primary business—the making of money. One of the effects of the new movement then was to discourage exclusiveness in art, to create a taste for it in the pit and gallery instead of confining it to the stalls and boxes.

William Morris well said, "I do not want art for a few, any more than education for a few, or freedom for a few." It would be incorrect to say that there had been no appreciation whatever of the beautiful on the part of all those who did not belong to the upper classes of society, but, it may be safely asserted, that, as a rule, they did not bring it to bear upon everyday life. They could admire

beautiful scenery, or a fine painting, but the matter ended there, and did not result in any serious effort to apply art-principles at home.

The early adherents of the "new craze," as it was called, were treated to a plentiful supply of ridicule, some of which was, no doubt, deserved. Time and experience were required to tone down the eccentricities of many whose enthusiasm was not always tempered by judgment and knowledge. Some persons erred in thinking that *Æstheticism* consisted in putting their willow-pattern plates on a shelf in the drawing-room, in pinning up odd bits of Oriental drapery in places where they could not possibly be required, under the impression that they gave a tone to something or another, in sticking a Japanese umbrella in the fireplace and Japanese fans, at fourpence three-farthings each, on the walls. These were the people who effusively patronized *Æstheticism* for a very brief period, because in the first place it created an excuse for shopping, and secondly, because it afforded an opportunity of impressing their neighbours with the fact that they were quite up to date in the matter of taste. When *Æstheticism* began and ended in this, it undoubtedly afforded opportunity for disparaging remarks.

But, allowing for the little weaknesses to which the fashion gave rise, I doubt if we should care to go back to the old state of things which it supplanted. Most of us can call up mental pictures of the drawing-room as it was, or, if we cannot, the report of the Jurors for the Great Exhibition of 1851 will help us. Speaking of English furniture, it says :

"In fabrics where flatness would seem most essential, the imitative treatment is often carried to the greatest excess ; and carpets are ornamented with water-lilies floating on their natural bed, with fruits and flowers poured forth in overwhelming abundance in all the glory of their shades and hues ; or we are startled by a lion at our hearth, or a leopard on our rug, his spotted coat imitated even to its relief as well as to its colour, while palm trees and landscapes are used as the ornaments of muslin curtains."

I will venture to complete the picture by adding a dazzling white and gold wallpaper; a suite of furniture upholstered in either emerald green or turquoise blue rep; and a centre table concealed by an obtrusively coloured cloth, and on which are arranged a collection of brilliantly bound books at mathematically precise distances one from the other. A lady inquiring at a bookseller's for a volume of poetry was asked what author she would prefer. She replied, "Oh, I don't mind so long as the cover harmonizes with a red plush tablecloth." In summer cover up the only reposeful spot in the room, the fireplace, with anything that will attract attention by its colouring. Place a golden-legged console table or two round the sides, and garnish the whole with some unblushing travesties of nature in the shape of wax flowers or fruit, under glass shades; some birds very evidently stuffed; a few Bohemian glass vases on bead mats as centrepieces; an assortment of aggressively obtrusive antimacassars in Berlin wool; and enough crudely coloured chromo-lithographs on the walls to show your appreciation of pictorial art. You will then have reproduced the main features in all their simple beauty of the fine old English drawing-room of a very common type before *Æstheticism* came into fashion. It was essentially a state room, with a stern sense of propriety about it, and a frowning deprecation of comfort and cosiness.

The dining-room of the time—which may be described as the old port period—was a more comfortable apartment, but its furniture and surroundings suggested a solemn ponderosity, indicative of how serious a business was eating and drinking.

The *Æsthetes* certainly showed us how to improve our surroundings, and proof thereof is to be found in the drawing-room as it now exists wherever refinement and cultivation hold a place. It would be rash to assert that every vestige of the old order of things has passed away, for, with the best intentions, we have none of us *Aladdin's* lamp to enable us, at a moment's notice, to gratify whatever tastes we may possess, and the power of the purse holds many in check. But when we furnish or decorate we do

not straightway reduplicate the taste of our immediate predecessors.

We also owe something to the *Æsthetes* for bringing home to us that what was high-priced was not necessarily artistic, or that what was cheap was not, as a necessary consequence, vulgar. It was gradually realized that the worth of an article lay in the effect it produced and the pleasure it gave, irrespective of its intrinsic value. So a demand was created for goods which, while they possessed grace of form or beauty of colour, were not costly in price. Quaint curios and artistic knick-knacks, which of late years have been imported in such large quantities from India, China, Japan, and elsewhere, have taken the place of the shell-baskets and glaring glass vases, studded with imitation precious stones, that previously figured as irreproachable drawing-room ornaments. We are frequently reminded of the disadvantages of living in an "age of cheapness" in the matter of ornamentations, but there is some gain to persons of limited incomes if they can enhance the artistic charm of their rooms at a less cost than in the old days of gilt console tables and royal blue drawing-room suites. But the changes I have alluded to would have been impossible had there not been a growing desire, on the part of the world in general, to throw off the old trammels of conventionalism and to live in an atmosphere of greater freedom with reference not only to art but other matters.

But while art was popularized by being brought within the pecuniary reach of those who had previously regarded it as an unattainable luxury, it must not be forgotten that the new school, had its wealthy patrons, among whom Mr. Frederick Leyland and Mr. Graham, of Glasgow, may be quoted as conspicuous examples. Such patronage as was represented by the wealth of such connoisseurs enabled Rossetti and others to work out their own art theories, irrespective of what the popular taste of the moment might be. Mr. Leyland did much to stimulate the *Æsthetic* School of painting by his handsome commissions to the artists representing it, and his collection of pictures was a most notable one. It embraced magnificent examples

of the works of Rossetti, Burne-Jones, Madox Brown, W. G. Windus, and other artists of the same period, with many masterpieces of the Early Italian School.

The effect of the movement upon the costume of women was very distinctly marked, and such alterations as it brought about were, when they were not pushed to an extreme, improvements. Previously wearers had been content to ring the changes upon primary colours, but now many gradations of shade began to be utilized. They were more subdued and reposeful in tone than those to which we had been accustomed, and consequently they were at first described by many as "faded" and "washed out." But the sage greens, the peacock blues, and the terra-cotta reds have held their own ever since, both for the decoration of the person and the house. In style and make the garments belonged to the period that Kate Greenaway made her own in the many books which her pencil so charmingly illustrated. But such costume was exposed to much hostile criticism on the part of those who had lived in an age when crinolines and pork-pie hats represented taste in dress.

The mention of Miss Greenaway reminds us how great an improvement was manifested at this time in children's pictorial books, especially those which were produced on *Æsthetic* lines by such graceful artists as the lady named, Walter Crane, and Randolph Caldecott. It was in itself a new and welcome departure when artists such as these devoted some of their talent to the younger folk. The gaudily coloured toy-books of the past have thus, to a large extent, been superseded, and thereby not a little has been done, I think, to foster an appreciation of beauty at a time when the mind is young and plastic.

But the *Æsthete*s had to thank others as well as themselves for much of the success attending their efforts, and to no one were they more indebted than to the professional humorist, literary, pictorial, and dramatic. When the delineator of "society manners," the apostle of "good form," Du Maurier, took *Æstheticism* in hand, its claim to fashionable consideration was conclusively established. But whilst the graphic portrayals, week after week in *Punch*, of the vagaries of the Maudles, the Postlethwaites,

and the Ciambue Browns largely helped to keep Æstheticism in the front, as a social topic it, at the same time, did much towards laughing out of existence its besetting weaknesses.

If the Æsthetes were not themselves witty, they were undoubtedly the cause of wit in others, and this is particularly true of the satire which the stage brought to bear upon them. The success of two plays in particular, of which the Æsthetes were the subjects, was phenomenal. One of these was Burnard's clever adaptation, under the title of *The Colonel*, of an old play. In its new dress it vividly depicted the discomforts of a home given over to ultra-Æstheticism, manipulated for private ends by a couple of adventurers. The other was that most brilliant piece of humour and most charming of comic operas, Gilbert and Sullivan's *Patience*. Any cult that provoked so melodious a piece of merriment as this has some claim to kindly remembrance. Although there was nothing personal, in an objectionable sense, in either of these pieces, the public, in the case of the opera especially, identified certain leading Æsthetes with the characters represented. The picture of the advanced Æsthete as

"A most intense young man,  
A soulful-eyed young man,  
An ultra-poetical, super-æsthetical,  
Out of the way young man,"

exactly hit off the characteristics with which the world credited him. Similarly, the dislike to rude health, which Æsthetic poems and paintings seemed to emphasize, was conveyed in the succeeding lines :

"A pallid and thin young man,  
A haggard and lank young man,  
A greenery-yallery, Grosvenor gallery,  
Foot-in-the-grave young man."

It is hardly surprising that many theatre-goers and readers of comic papers, representing a large section of the general public, who were not brought into direct contact with Æstheticism itself, accepted the artists' and authors' creations as portraiture from the life, and went about imagining that all Æsthetes were alike, and talked

and acted similarly to the Bunthornes, the Streykes, the Maudles, *et hoc genus omne*. The satires themselves had a distinct value in indicating with the necessary exaggeration what Æstheticism might lead to if pushed to an extreme, and this tended to arrest the further development of its objectionable side.

The story of the Æsthetic movement would be too manifestly imperfect if it omitted all reference to Oscar Wilde, who, in its final stage, was the leading actor, upon whom attention was specially focused, and who, in the public estimation, represented the personal culmination of the extremest vagaries of the cult. Instances are forthcoming in which the brilliancy of genius has been overshadowed by a distempered imagination, but it is, happily, exceptional when the climax is reached in a character so indelibly stained as was his. In forgetfulness of the event which irreparably shattered a life, we have now only to consider the part played in anterior days by one who was the Postlethwaite of Du Maurier's *Punch* drawings; the Archibald Grosvenor of *Patience*, the Lambert Streyke of *The Colonel*. The son of a distinguished father, Sir William Wilde, a surgeon-oculist to the Queen in Ireland, and of European reputation in his profession, and of a mother who was a gifted poetess and a personality of much charm, the social world freely opened its gates to him from the onset of his life. After a year at Trinity College, Dublin, where he won the gold medal for Greek and a scholarship, he gained a scholarship at Magdalen College, Oxford, and further distinguished himself, before his university career came to an end, by securing a first-class in moderations, a first-class in "greats," and the Newdigate Prize for English Verse. I knew him in those days, when there was no cause to be ashamed to be seen in his company. I met him on several occasions and enjoyed the sparkle of his wit, his readiness of repartee, and his cultured singing. I was present when he recited his prize poem—the subject of which was "Ravenna"—in the Sheldonian Theatre at Commemoration, and it held its own in the long series of these compositions. Then, in the zenith of his fame as an Æsthete, I heard him lecture,



AN OXFORD CARICATURE OF OSCAR WILDE  
WHEN AN UNDERGRADUATE OF MAGDALEN COLL.  
*Reproduced, by permission of Mr. H. Giles, from a drawing by B. Nicholls*



and was amused by his calm insouciance, his breadth of assurance, and his studied audacity. He was a good enough lecturer to attract large paying audiences both in England and America; he was a genuine poet, and a brilliant dramatist, as two of his comedies, *Lady Windermere's Fan* and *The Importance of being Earnest*, which still hold the stage, amply testify. The possession of such gifts emphasizes the painfulness of the crowning catastrophe of a career so full of bright possibilities.

The Æsthetic movement had been in existence some time before Oscar Wilde stepped into the position of the high-priest of the cult, and succeeded in getting himself regarded as the inspired interpreter of its oracles. In this he was greatly helped by his own confident belief in himself, by his capacity to induce others to accept him at his own valuation as the personal embodiment of all that real Æstheticism represented, and by the satirists of the movement, whose shafts of ridicule, being specially aimed at him, kept him always in the full glare of the limelight. He first developed his Æsthetic proclivities at Oxford, where, for a time, he was a devoted follower of Ruskin, and was one of the band of undergraduate enthusiasts, who, at the professor's bidding, devoted themselves, between the intervals of study, to road-making. It has been authoritatively stated that "he had the honour of filling Mr. Ruskin's special wheelbarrow," and that it was the great author of *Modern Painters* himself who taught him to trundle it. His rooms at Magdalen College, in which he endeavoured "to live up to his blue china," were filled with innumerable artistic treasures, and were a rallying-point for those whose tastes and aspirations were akin to his own, whilst they were also a centre of attack by those robust spirits who could not bear with equanimity the eccentricities of the cult. Thus it will be seen that Oxford had once more a hand in the development of an Æsthete.

Taking the cue from the professional humorists, outsiders pictured Oscar Wilde as the incarnation, merely, of all the affectations that Æstheticism was heir to, and, metaphorically, as attitudinizing with a sunflower in his buttonhole, a lily in his hand, and a peacock's feather in

his cap. This, the popular estimate of him, stood out sufficiently in relief to throw all else into shadow. The fact was, notoriety was to him as the breath of his nostrils, and when he laid himself out to play a certain rôle, and attitudinized accordingly, he did it sufficiently well to make it pay and to induce the world to take him seriously. When he was interviewed by newspaper correspondents, his remarks made what is professionally known as "good copy," because he usually said something that startled a serious world by its audacity. When, after crossing the Atlantic, he responded to an inquiry on the subject by expressing his disappointment with the "mighty ocean," persons of a superior type, who expect poetic rhapsodies on such an occasion, in accordance with precedent, were naturally shocked.

He set conventionality at defiance in other respects, and in his lectures expressed some revolutionary sentiments with reference to modern costume, from an art point of view. He had a good word to say for knee-breeches and silk stockings, but spoke disrespectfully of coats and trousers, and more in sorrow than in anger, of the chimney-pot hat. He even had the hardihood to insinuate that the Nineteenth Century Englishman in his "Sunday best" was not, from a spectacular point of view, comparable to the Ancient Greek in his temple get-up. As neither the fashionable tailors nor Mrs. Grundy could endorse anything so heterodox, it need hardly be said that he made but few converts to his views on costume. The freedom with which he enunciated extreme opinions, such as these, induced the polite world—or, as we used to term them before the war, the "smart people"—who are always on the look-out for something piquant, to flock to his lectures in order to listen to the next dreadful thing he might say, and this was very much in consonance with his expectations and desires. He was the central figure when those who had taken up Æstheticism either as a means of self-advertisement, or for a passing whim, succumbed to the thwacks and thrusts of the stage and press combined. Hence, Æstheticism fell into disrepute, so far as society was concerned. As a fashion, it had lasted longer than it had any right to expect,

for it had endured the strain and wear and tear of several London seasons. The time came, however, for it to receive its *cong  *. It had lost the charm of novelty, the freshness of youth, and so it was laid upon the shelf reserved for Society pets that have passed into the sere and yellow leaf. Here it has the companionship of such shorter-lived favourites of fashion as the Professional Beauty and the American Cowboy, who, when they had had their little day, departed into obscurity.

Its story, therefore, as far as the outside world is concerned, is told, and the curtain fell when *  stheticism* was said to be "played out." This was true enough of it as an organized and concerted movement. But it was the shadow, not the substance, that disappeared. The fact of Society dropping it did not drive it out of existence but merely out of fashion. In the same way society frowned in due course upon the Professional Beauty, who straightway disappeared, but beauties did not become extinct on this account. *  stheticism*, in the sense in which it was understood by those who, in all honesty and sincerity, sought to cultivate a knowledge and love of the beautiful, irrespective of anything else, still lives. Its best features remain to us, whilst the weaker have gone to the wall, so once more the fittest survives. The young men who grew their hair long and posed before the world as superior beings, who were, as the song says, "not only as good as they *were*, but as good as they *ought* to be," in everything pertaining to art, could well be spared. They were an incident, and not a necessity of the case. But we need not, therefore, generalize so far as to classify every *  sthete* as a prig any more than it is fair to set down every Conservative as an obstructionist, every Liberal as a Socialist, or every disbeliever in the Thirty-nine Articles as an Atheist.

I have not, intentionally, minimized the weaknesses of the cult, nor magnified its virtues, but I think art would have been the poorer if it had never existed.

It may be admitted that other influences have had a great share in educating the art tastes of the community, such as, for instance, the Great Exhibition of 1851, the wisely directed efforts of the late Prince Consort, the writings of

Ruskin, and especially the work carried on at South Kensington. But nothing less than a combined movement, systematically directed to a certain end, was required to focus public attention and to create an interest in art among those who were neither professional artists nor wealthy patrons. Art has been brought into more immediate contact with everyday life and everyday people, and whether Æstheticism be fashionable or unfashionable matters not now, for it has a status which will be more and more assured as time goes on.

The earlier as well as the later leaders of the movement were fiercely attacked and mercilessly ridiculed. It has been said that it is the ridicule that kills, but this is only partially true. It is only effective in giving the *coup de grâce* when the victim is already sick unto death. Neither Holman Hunt, Rossetti, nor Burne-Jones forsook their methods in deference to the views of the critics, and the position they occupy in the art world is their amplest justification. The whirligig of time has done something, too, for Whistler, for his picture which Ruskin declared to be so dear at 200 guineas was afterwards sold by auction for 800 guineas.

The Æsthetes erred in attempting too strictly to define a standard of taste, and in too despotically enforcing it. They were too apt to stigmatize as "bad art," without regard to circumstances, that which did not exactly conform to the laws they had themselves laid down.

We must think for ourselves in art, as in all else, if we are to derive any real satisfaction from it. He who, regardless of expense, hands over the decorating and furnishing of his house to an art firm to do as seemeth best to them, may get all the taste which he pays for, but he is little better than he who buys books by the yard to cover the walls of what he is pleased to call his library. The acquisition of knowledge is, in itself, a refining mental exercise, enhancing the delight of its possession, and it turns into a perpetual feast what would otherwise be but a Barmecide's meal. If we buy beauty at other folk's bidding, and are content with their warranty as to genuineness, or if we pin our faith upon a trade-mark, in lieu of bringing

our own perceptions into play, there will be little joy in the transaction. We must work out our own salvation, and, although the evolutionary process may be slow and tedious, it will be sure and enduring.

Towards the end of the Victorian period the Post-impressionists began to air their eccentricities, and were followed by the Positivists, the Extremists, the Cubists and other singularities. As, however, these stand in pretty much the same relation to pictorial art as the exponents of the tango, the fox-trot and the bunny-hug do to Terpsichorean art, or as rag-time does to music, it is unnecessary to go into particulars regarding them.

I venture to think that modern art-experts are too apt to exalt mere technique at the cost of the emotional quality. The value of a painting lies not merely in its strict adherence to certain canons of art. This may appeal in its full force to the highly cultivated professor, but something beyond this is wanted to interest ordinary mortals who are in a large majority. Victorian art has become a byword of reproach with many superior persons, Frith being held up as a terrible example; yet who among ordinary mortals can resist the pathos of the acrobatic group in his *Derby Day*, with the hungry little tumbler looking round longingly at the gorgeous luncheon on an adjoining drag. This arouses just those feelings of pity in the human breast that are translated into after-deeds. In addition, Frith's pictures graphically depict, for the benefit of succeeding generations, the most salient features of the social life of the age in which he lived. Lady Butler's *Roll Call* and Fildes' *Doctor* are further examples of an art fulfilling a function beyond merely illustrating such laws of colour and composition as are regarded by some as absolutely essential. So it is the fashion nowadays to point the finger of scorn at these particular paintings and at a good many similar ones which are described as "typical of the Victorian period," this being the severest possible form of condemnation. If Hogarth had painted in Victorian days he would have afforded a fine target for the latter-day art-critics. The Tate Gallery and the Chantrey Bequest Pictures are always singled out for special animadversion as "too

utterly utter for words." But the general public, to whom it is desirable to offer inducements to take kindly to art, and who mostly pay the piper, either in the way of Parliamentary grants or in exhibition fees, hold a different opinion, and have the hardihood to prefer pictures they can comprehend to the nebulous eccentricities of the latest school.

We are suffering somewhat similarly at the hands of the professors, with regard to music, and composers, in whose works our forefathers delighted, have to give place to a tribe of rhapsodies, nocturnes, etc., in which, too often, whatever tune there is, is harried to death before it is done with. How seldom now can we enjoy Handel—apart from oratorios—Haydn, Purcell or Arne; whilst our national melodies, which breathe the very spirit of the English people, are but rarely heard except at patriotic concerts, when a good cause can be served by the stimulating effect they produce upon the mind of the ordinary Englishman. I would appeal to those who are responsible for the drawing-up of band programmes not to allow a passion for "elevating the taste of the people"—which, of course, we know is *the* objective of every conductor—to become a fetish, as it is apt to induce the ordinary concert-goer to view the musical bill of fare very much as Prince Henry did the tavern bill on a certain memorable occasion, when he exclaimed, "O monstrous! but one halfpenny worth of bread to this intolerable deal of sack." It has to be remembered that not even those who are capable of rising to ethereal heights all appreciate the barometrical pressure sufficiently to want to stop there always. Mont Blanc is somewhat chilly as a permanent abiding-place.

Vocalists inflict upon us the latest milk-and-watery modern ballad, or the tedious sentimentality of "song-cycles," as they are termed. Verily, the "royalty system" has much to answer for! What are the songs with which the fame of their predecessors of the concert-room is particularly associated? I can answer the question, for I heard Jenny Lind sing "With Verdure Clad," Titiens "The Last Rose of Summer," Sims Reeves "Tom Bowling," Catherine Hayes "The Harp that once through Tara's

Halls," Mario "When other lips and other hearts," Clara Novello "I know that my Redeemer Liveth," Patti "Home, Sweet Home," Santley "Oh, ruddier than the Cherry," and many other eminent singers in similar old-fashioned, but sterling, compositions, so direct in their appeal. In no case of those mentioned was the composer living when I heard the artist referred to sing his composition, but now newness seems to be regarded as having the first claim to consideration. If the works mentioned were not in the programme, we always knew the artists had them ready in reserve for the inevitable encore, and we used to express our delight at the gratification of our wishes by a burst of applause as we recognized the opening bars of the instrumental introduction. I don't suggest that our present-day vocalists should court comparison with the famous artists of the past by adopting their songs, but there is a great unworked mine of old English ballads, which not only captivate the ear but stir the pulse in a way which the latest up-to-date production fails to do.

I do not mean to say that *every* latter-day singer comes within the scope of my venturesome remarks. Madame Clara Butt, for instance, cannot be reproached with neglecting the compositions that delighted me long before the world of art and charity was ennobled by her advent, or with ignoring those sterling works of our own countrymen which are for all time. Had I never heard her voice in anything but "Kathleen Mavourneen," I should be eternally grateful to her; but my debt does not end there.

Having endeavoured to do but justice to a Queen of Song, I would follow it up by paying tribute to a master of verse, the sweet song-writer of to-day—and yesterday as well—I mean Fred Weatherly, whom I claim as a Victorian, because the pleasure his verses have given me date back to the time when I had not a grey hair on my head. If modern ballads always rose to the level of his graceful lyrics there would be no opportunity to disparage them, if only the musical setting corresponded. My knowledge of him goes back to the days when he was a scholar of Brasenose, and he stood in the rostrum of the Sheldonian Theatre as the author and reciter of one of the prize

Congratulatory Odes on the occasion of the installation of the late Marquess of Salisbury as Chancellor.

The ordinary man, immersed in the business of life, finds not his relaxation in unravelling tangled intricacies, or in fathoming the depths of ambiguous suggestiveness; otherwise the æsthetic poets would be more popular than they are. I recently read that whatever else Rudyard Kipling could do, he could not write poetry, and, judged by the Æsthetic standard, this is true enough. Nevertheless, he can move our hearts and stir us to action, and we need no key to his meaning. But outspoken directness is not yet entirely at a discount, or "The Day" of Henry Chappel would never have been hailed, as it has been, as a crystallization of the voice of the people. And whether it be painting, music or poetry, the value of its appeal lies not in its exclusiveness.

## CHAPTER XXIV

Some Old Entertainments—A Day in London—Cremorne—Evans's—The Music Hall of the Past—Nigger Minstrels—The Old Polly—The Coliseum—The Circus.

**A**MUSEMENTS do not seem to retain their old form and shape over very lengthened periods, although the principle to which they owe their existence, a diverting of the human mind, remains the same.

In my time, I have seen the passing out of existence of many forms of entertainment, which, in their day, were recognized public attractions. The recollection of my first visit to London itself—for on my two previous visits, as I have already explained, it was simply the highway to something else—brings home to one the mutability of human affairs, inasmuch as nearly everything I then went to see has since disappeared. It was in 1856 that my father took me for a day's excursion to some of the sights of town, and the first of the "lions" which we honoured with our attention—though I can't imagine why—was old Hungerford Fish Market, which exists no longer. Then he showed me the Suspension Bridge close by, and you may look in vain for it there now, as it has been transported to Clifton. We next inspected the interior of Gatti's Restaurant, which has disappeared from the spot it then occupied, and taken up its abode elsewhere. Nothing during the day impressed me more than that refreshment house, for there, for the first time in my life, I had a fourpenny ice—all to myself. I thought it was the most delicious compound I had ever absorbed. Had my mythological knowledge been equal to the occasion, I should have believed it was the ambrosia of the gods, for its flavour was equal to its size, and its memory haunts me still in a pleasurable sense.

Thus, braced up for the day, we went to Leicester Square, and had a rollicking time at Wyld's Great Globe.

This was a large spherical erection, projected by Mr. James Wyld, M.P., in the centre of the Square, on the spot now laid out as a garden, and which encircles the Shakesperean statue presented by Baron Grant. Having entered the building, you found it was a huge terrestrial globe, with the countries mapped out on the inside instead of the outside surface. You could make the circuit of the globe by means of winding staircases, which landed you on platforms within measurable distance of any particular spot on the earth, or rather map, you had a fancy to investigate. I didn't think much of it myself, having found an ordinary globe of the schoolroom size quite sufficient to fulfil all my requirements, which were not exacting, as I was never very keen on geography. The whole thing would have been much more comprehensible if the countries had been marked on the outside instead of the inside of the building, only then, of course, nobody would have paid for admission, as the show would have been seen for nothing. An Oriental museum was an additional attraction of the building. But no one can find the Great Globe in Leicester Square now.

Our next piece of dissipation was a visit to an imposing-looking building, with Oriental towers and minarets, standing in the Square, on the spot where the Alhambra now challenges attention. It was styled the Royal Panopticon, and was a sort of glorified Polytechnic. For a shilling you could be there for hours, either listening to so-called scientific lectures, each of brief duration, with opportunities of receiving electric shocks, or studying natural and unnatural curiosities in a museum. The great attraction, however, was an illuminated fountain, which spouted water from the floor to the roof, a powerful illuminant of varying colours being directed upon it from above. This was considered to be a great novelty of exceeding beauty, though I doubt if we should see much in it now, after the efforts of Earl's Court and Shepherd's Bush. An electric organ was a further draw. Needless to say, the Royal Panopticon has also faded out of existence.

Having satiated ourselves with these alluring distractions, we went off, I suppose as a chastening measure after

so much frivolling, to inspect the ruins of Covent Garden Theatre, which had been burnt down only a few days previously, the fire having broken out during a great Fancy Dress Ball, organized by Anderson, the Wizard of the North. As my father knew the agent of the property, we were admitted to the ruins themselves, and an awful spectacle of desolation they presented, little more than the outer walls remaining. I was permitted to bring a piece of the ruins away with me as a memento. This finished our programme, and we then made our way to Paddington Station, the only place of any consequence I went to that day that is still to be found on its original site.

After that first visit to town, I welcomed every opportunity to renew acquaintance with it, for I have always had a great fondness for London from a child upwards. The British Museum, the National Gallery, the Tower of London and all similar sights exercise a spell over me still, and I hope ever will. At the same time, I admit I took with zest deep draughts at the fount of its mere amusements and frivolities whenever I had the chance. I am one of the rapidly diminishing band who can speak with experience of the glories of Cremorne and the perfection of the Welsh rarebits at Evans's, though I just missed Vauxhall and the Cider Cellars, which I think now was just as well. Cremorne was next kin to the Jardin Mabille, the Château des Eleurs and the Closerie des Lilas, where, in the days of Napoleon III., I saw the can-can danced in all its vigour and a good many other things I should be sorry to have to write about. The Metropolitan licensing authorities had, however, a much keener sense of propriety than those in Paris, and so Cremorne could only copy its French exemplars at a very respectful distance. Except on Derby and University Boat Race nights, Cremorne was free from rowdyism, and, to outward observance, its dissipation mainly consisted in dancing on what was inaccurately termed "the crystal platform," the only approximation to crystal being found in the illuminations, which consisted of thousands of variegated lamps and gas jets. In the centre was the orchestra, mounted high up in

a circular gallery, Chinese in design, and brilliantly lighted. The rest of the place resembled an ordinary public tea-garden, with plenty of little supper-boxes about, where you could refresh the inner man—or whoever you escorted thither—at famine prices. It was said of Vauxhall, and might be equally true of Cremorne, that before engagement, every carver thereat had to give proof of his ability to make one ham go as far as possible, by showing that he could cut the slices from it so thin that he could cover the whole of the gardens with them. The company was, like the lamps, variegated, and embraced all sorts and conditions of men and women, who consorted together with a certain amount of freedom. There were a few side-shows, including a maze, for which, of course, one paid extra, and the usual assortment of plaster statuary and cosy alcoves, with just room for two, about the leafy avenues. In the early part of the evening, as a preliminary to the dancing, there was an open-air concert, though I think that both that and the dancing took place under cover in wet weather. The only piece of vocalization I heard there, remaining still in my memory, was given by an attractive-looking young lady who captivated me by the archness with which she rendered a ballad, the burden of which ran as follows :

“ They call me the cantineer,  
I'm the pet of the whole brigade,  
And every man, from the rear to the van,  
Salutes to my gay cockade.”

Although I have never, to my knowledge, heard the song since then, it has stuck to me, tune and all, for nearly sixty years, though whether this was due to the merits of the composition, to the talent of the singer, or to her personal attractions, I am unable, after this lapse of time, to say ; probably it may be put down to the *tout ensemble*.

I visited Cremorne in good company, for it was my father who took me there. The women-folk, who apparently knew more about its iniquities than either my father or myself, when they heard of where we had been, held up their hands in horror, under the impression that it was the highway to perdition. Perhaps it was, but, on looking back, I am unable to trace any of my personal

backslidings to the good time I had there, possibly because I was not of an age to understand and appreciate all the wiles and subtleties of one who shall be nameless.

Evans's Supper Rooms, in Covent Garden, have become historic on account of the company frequenting them. Their patrons included most of the leading constellations in literature, from Thackeray downwards, together with many of the most famous representatives of art, the bar, the stage and sport, whilst ordinary country-folk could not claim to have seen life if they had not done Evans's. Yet, like other Metropolitan institutions I have mentioned, it lives now only in memory. The young man from the country, when he came to town to enjoy the sights, included in his programme a dinner at Simpson's, a visit to the Haymarket to see "Bucky," and a supper at Evans's to top up with. I went there before attempts to modernize it had entirely obliterated its old traditions. Its special excellences were its Welsh rarebits, its devilled kidneys, and its choir of boys. Its solo vocalists included Sam Cowell, a noted comic singer, whose *tour de force* was "Billy Barlow," which became one of the street songs of the day. Then there was Herr von Joel, a ventriloquist, whose speciality was imitating the various sounds emitted by farmyard and other animals, especially "de leetle birds." He also "jodelled" and played tunes on a walking-stick. But best of all was the glee-singing, which was admirable and was regarded as the leading attraction. It was delightful to hear "The Chough and Crow," "The Red-cross Knight," "Oh, who will o'er the downs so free," and "Glorious Apollo," rendered so appreciatively and melodiously by the bright, fresh voices of the well-trained boys. We sat at separate little tables, at which the refreshments were served, and ate and drank as we listened.

"Paddy" Green, the proprietor, for Evans was no longer in the flesh, flitted about from table to table welcoming his visitors, who were all of them his "dear boys," whether they were strangers to him or not, and offering them a pinch from his snuff-box. He was a little, old-fashioned gentleman, rubicund of countenance, and courteous and cheery of manner. His costume harmonized with

his appearance, for his dress-suit was of an antique cut, and he wore a frilled shirt. Then Herr von Joel, who was a distinct contrast to Paddy in size and height, being tall and amply proportioned, came round for a chat. I don't know how many years he had given his zoological illustrations in that hall, but no one could remember when he wasn't there, and it was officially stated that he was retained on the strength of the establishment in consequence of his long services. His special mission, when not entertaining us in other ways, was to bring under the notice of visitors a very superior brand of cigar, of which they were permitted to acquire samples in exchange for current coin of the realm. No one could resist the Herr's insinuating manners and his broken English, and, in fact, it would have been contrary to the traditions and etiquette of the establishment to have done so. Adjoining the Concert Hall was an annexe, on the walls of which was a fine collection of prints representing actors and actresses of the Garrick and Kemble periods.

Evans's must not be associated with less reputable establishments, such as the Coal Hole and the Cider Cellars, where our progenitors also forgathered, or with what Thackeray called "the Cave of Harmony," where, with good reason, Colonel Newcome gave vent to his righteous indignation. Ladies were not permitted to be seen at Evans's, but they were allotted a private supper-room in a gallery overlooking the hall, where they could enjoy the music without being seen, as they were behind a grille. There was, of course, no promenade, and I am inclined to think that it would be distinctly conducive to the cause of morality if public bodies refused to license any place of indoor amusement that provided for it. People who attend for the sake of the entertainment do not want to be using their legs all the time, and those, for whom the promenade is specially designed, who are present for other reasons, need not be encouraged. It was a distinct loss when the harmless old supper-rooms passed out of existence, for there is nothing now at all corresponding to them. They lacked the glare and glitter of the modern music-hall, and the more elaborate and exciting fare provided thereat,

so they were voted old-fashioned by the newer generations, whilst there were not enough of their old patrons left to keep them going. Besides which, stowed away in an out-of-the-way corner of Covent Garden Market, they were in too much of a backwater to advertise themselves properly, and less easy to find at night than the brilliantly illuminated temples of amusement in better known thoroughfares.

Evans's contemporaries—such as the Cider Cellars, the Coal Hole and the Judge and Jury—were disreputable places, and deservedly came to an end, and that a bad one. I cannot speak from personal experience, as, happily, they passed out of ken before my time, but I heard quite enough about them from their former patrons to satisfy me that the world could very well dispense with them. Whatever may be said in dispraise of the modern music-hall, it is a great improvement in many respects upon most of its predecessors. At its start, it followed too closely the older institutions, which depended so much for their profits upon the sale of drinks. At the Canterbury and the Oxford and similar halls, when they were first opened, you were expected, although you had paid for admission, to stand yourself a drink in addition, and if you were slow in ordering one a waiter was prompt in asking you what he could get you. Attached to the seat in front of you was a shelf for your glass, if you weren't sitting at a table, and immediately under the stage sat the chairman with a hammer, which he used for the bespeaking of attention when he announced "the turns," and for vigorously applauding the performers. He encouraged the consumption of liquor by his own example, and was always surrounded by a few choice spirits, human not alcoholic, who kept him in countenance, and who were on that familiar footing which gave them the inestimable privilege of occasionally filling up his glass at their expense. The chairman, his hammer, and his little coterie, together with the drinks in the auditorium, have disappeared, and the entertainment itself is now the chief draw. I never could understand why nature should require to be specially sustained in theatres and music-halls—I always found the

performance stimulating enough if it were good for anything, and if it were not, imbibing spirituous liquor would not mend it, though if taken in sufficient quantity it might render you to a great extent oblivious of either the merits or defects of an entertainment.

Nowadays, except on a racecourse or at a regatta, a man who blacks his face before he sings is a *rara avis*, and there they only appear in ones and twos. Even by the sad sea waves they have been supplanted by the pierrots. Yet in the days of my youth they did flourish and abound. The very first public entertainment I was taken—or rather carried—to, towards the end of the forties, was of this description. It seemed to have been thought that my early education ought to include a knowledge of the first artificially-black troupe who ever visited this country. They came from America, and were known as “The Ethiopian Serenaders.” I am not likely to forget them, on account of the sheer, abject terror I suffered at sight of them. I had never before seen a man with a black face, and, being as I was, in the front row of seats, close to the platform, I felt it was much too near to be pleasant, inasmuch as they could easily jump down and seize me at any moment, which I quite expected they would do. The bones fascinated me in the same way as the cobra does the rabbit previous to devouring him. I was under the impression that every roll of his eyes, every contortion of his mouth, was intended for me alone, and, at last, unable to endure the strain any longer, my ecstasy of terror found relief in a series of shrieks. This afforded me instant relief, because the person in whose charge I was, at once hurried me out of the room in double-quick time, to my great joy, as I felt I had been saved from a fate too horrible to contemplate.

It was this troupe who introduced into this country a bunch of songs which became the recognized melodies of the streets, and included “Buffalo Gals,” “Ole Dan Tucker,” “My skiff is on de shore,” and others of a similar character. The Ethiopians preceded by some years the celebrated Christy (afterwards the Moore and Burgess) Minstrels, who for so long held sway at St. James’s Hall. Their success produced many imitators, and some

very good ones, who travelled the provinces and supplied a demand which lasted over a long time. At last, however, this form of entertainment failed to attract, and so gradually passed out of existence. After all, the only justification on the part of the public, for preferring to hear a man sing with his face corked, instead of in its natural condition, was furnished by the idea that his vocalization was typical of that of the real nigger, which, of course, it wasn't, being no more like what the genuine Sambo sings than "Yip-i-addy-i-ay" is like "The Last Rose of Summer." When the Ethiopians first appeared, many people took them for the veritable thing, and bets were actually laid as to whether or not they were. At any rate, their songs were a deal nearer those of the natural darkie than were the sentimental ballads of the later troupes. One can't imagine the natural "coloured gem'man" warbling "Come where my love lies dreaming," "Let me kiss him for his mother," and such-like idiotic effusions.

A form of entertainment which was very popular when I was a child and had much to recommend it, was represented by the panorama and diorama. The panorama was a continuous series of pictures which gradually unrolled itself, whilst the latter usually consisted of separate pictures with special scenic effects. They usually illustrated either countries or wars, and much of my earliest knowledge of European cities, the Colonies, India, and some of our military campaigns was obtained in this pleasant way. The accompanying description was generally of the guide-book type, but sufficed for the purpose. Then Albert Smith improved upon it by importing his own personality into it, and his literary ability and dramatic powers combined produced such delightful entertainments as his "Overland Route," followed by "Mont Blanc" and "China," all of which I saw. He told us what was worth knowing about the places depicted, and also of the different types of humanity he came across there or on the journey, to the amusement of the town and to his own profit. Then there was John Parry, *literateur*, artist, singer, and most accomplished of pianists, whom I heard tell the story in song of "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves," illustrated by

his own drawings. He followed this by describing, with vocal and pianoforte illustrations, "An Evening Party." As he referred to his *dramatis personæ*, he sketched him or her in coloured chalks on a drawing-board at his side. Henry Russell, the composer of "Cheer, Boys, Cheer," "To the West, to the West," "Far, far upon the sea," and many other songs of the same class, which were extremely popular during the emigration days of the early fifties, entertained us with his lecture on "America," pictorially illustrated, and interspersed with a selection of his own songs. He had not the versatility and lightness of touch of either Albert Smith or John Parry, and his voice was more powerful than sweet, but, for all that, he was well worth listening to. He was the father of W. Clark Russell, the novelist of the sea, who spent his last years in Bath. These were one-man entertainments which lasted a whole evening, and they left no successors equal to themselves in their particular line. In after years, Corney Grain and Grossmith came nearest to John Parry, but just fell short of his exquisite finish, and they, too, have joined the majority.

Poole's Myriorama is an approximation to the old panorama, but it differs from it inasmuch as it does not rely for its attractiveness upon pictures alone, but makes a variety entertainment a leading feature. When I once met Mr. Poole, I congratulated him upon his circumspection in giving the public a show of this description, for it enabled many persons who couldn't possibly be seen inside a music-hall to enjoy the fare provided at such establishments without doing any violence to their consciences; for, of course, no one could be reproached for going to a panorama or its equivalent. The German Reeds were equally acute when they opened the Gallery of Illustration in Waterloo Place, and invited the public to witness dramatic pieces of the comic operetta type there. They reaped their reward in the number of people who could not bring themselves to go to a regular theatre, but who much enjoyed theatrical performances at a "Gallery of Illustration." In maturer years we are still young enough to play the old game of "make-believe," as we did in the nursery.

I fancy we were less exacting in our tastes and more easily amused fifty or sixty years ago than we are now, or else such places as the Royal Polytechnic and the Coliseum would never have lasted as long as they did. I used to be fond of both of them, especially the Polytechnic. The latter provided a varied programme, which went from "grave to gay, from lively to severe," the grave and severe being represented by scientific lectures, illustrated by experiments, by gentlemen who played all kinds of pranks with galvanic batteries, induction coils, and various gases, whilst music, ventriloquism and kindred arts supplied the gay and lively element. The many different entertainments followed one another in quick succession, each lasting about half an hour. As soon as one was finished you rushed off to another room, where its successor was to be found. The leading attraction was the diving-bell, in which for an extra payment you could descend into the watery depths of a huge tank and experience the novelty of a pronounced singing in the ears for some time after you had reached the surface again. The old place was on the decline, when, in the sixties, it suddenly jumped to fame and fortune by means of Pepper's ghost illusion, which drew crowds, including Royalty, to its doors for a long time. But when the novelty wore off and everybody realized how easily the ghosts were created, the dear old Polly followed the example of the spirits it had conjured up and became one of the things that were.

The Coliseum, just outside Regent's Park, was run on similar lines to the Polytechnic, so far as the multiplicity of entertainments was concerned, but it was a degree more frivolous than its prototype. It possessed a real waterfall with a Swiss chalet overlooking it and surrounded by sham rocks and ruins. At the summit of the building, to which you were conveyed in a sort of lift, there was a really good diorama of Paris by night. You looked down upon it from a gallery in the centre of a rotunda, round which the diorama was painted. Years afterwards the same idea was carried out on an enlarged scale elsewhere. I saw in London or Paris the Battle of Waterloo, the Fall of Jerusalem, the

Siege of Paris, and other subjects similarly illustrated. The crowning attraction of the Coliseum, which always wound up the evening, was what was termed a cyclorama, representing, in a most realistic way, the great earthquake at Lisbon. This impressed me very much, for nothing was left undone that could add to the horrors of the scene. The auditorium, having been put into a state of darkness, distant rumblings were heard, which increased in intensity till they seemed to shake the ground beneath us. The city lay in front of us, and we saw the earth rend itself and the buildings come toppling down in a series of mighty crashes. As the churches fell their bells clanged and the populace shrieked, whilst the air was full of other weird noises, including solemn music, ingeniously contrived to work our feelings up to the highest concert pitch. When the acme of disaster and desolation was reached the curtain fell, the lights were turned up, and the National Anthem played us out, no doubt chastened by the horrors we had just witnessed.

Out of the many forms of entertainment I have witnessed, I selected the few I have just described because they are specially typical of the times to which I am referring and because there are none nowadays quite like them.

The circus seems to be one of the old institutions gradually passing out of human ken, for we are visited by one now only at rare intervals. Yet in my young days Batty, Cooke, and Hengler, and later on Howes and Cushing, Ginnett, and Newsome, were travelling the country with large companies of biped and quadruped performers. Then still later came Sanger, Buffalo Bill, though of a different type to the rest, and lastly Barnum's monster show, which, with its dozen performances all going on at the same time in one large ring, and its collection of "freaks," was about the last word in circuses. Whether this had anything to do with killing such entertainments by raising the standard to a level which taught the public to expect too much for their money, I know not. Long before Barnum embarked upon his latest venture he came to Oxford to lecture upon his own doings, with the special intent of showing the

public how he had, at one time and another, diddled them. The undergraduates very much resented this, and demonstrated their feelings in a very illogical way. As they took exception to Barnum's presence in their midst, the best way to show it would have been to have stayed away from his lecture, and thereby frustrated his object, viz. the making of money, in coming. Instead of which they flocked to the Town Hall and planked down their coins for admission with the determination not to have what they had paid for. The moment Barnum appeared on the platform he was greeted with every species of noise indicating disapprobation. The would-be lecturer, who had a pretty powerful voice, was heard above the din to appeal for a hearing. The only response he got was a shout of "You're a humbug," to which his answer was, "Of course I am, or else I shouldn't be here. Tell me something I don't know." Every time he opened his mouth he was howled down, so at last he called out, "Well, gentlemen, you've paid your money to hear me, but it's quite immaterial to me whether you do or not." With that he seated himself, and, folding his arms, gazed complacently upon the disturbers. He kept them company for some time, and then, as the uproar continued, he bade his audience a cheery good-night and left them to their own reflections.

This, however, is a digression from the subject of circuses. I saw Barnum's great show both in London and the provinces, and didn't enjoy it half as much as I did the ordinary circus of the old days. But then I was much younger in those days, and that makes all the difference. The interest in this later development was too diffused, and you were overtaxed in endeavouring to see a dozen different performances all going on at the same time. In the old circuses all your attention was pleasantly concentrated upon the particular star who had possession of the arena. What a delight it was to watch the beautiful sylph in pink tarletan, toying with wreaths and attitudinizing on horseback, and anon gracefully leaping through the paper hoops, whilst the well-trained animal kept accurate time with his hoofs to that national anthem of the ring

from Auber's "Le Cheval de Bronze"! The clowns when I last saw them—though I haven't been to a circus for years—were of too superior a type, and dealt in recitations with every "h" aspirated. Wallet, "the Queen's Jester," as he was called, set the fashion in this, but I preferred Tom Barry, who was one of the real old-fashioned sort, with his opening address to the ring master, "Now, sir, what can I do for to go for to fetch for to carry." We knew then that there was fun galore in store. We had not to wait long for that fine old wheeze, which struck home at once, because everybody could understand and appreciate it. It was none of your subtle japes which had to be pondered over before it raised a smile, for this was sure of a huge guffaw on the instant. The clown began it by inquiring of the ring master, in a tone of innocent simplicity, if he were fond of poetry, and the dignified one to whom the question was addressed so far unbent as to admit that he was *very* fond of poetry. His interrogator then lured him on by asking him if he knew how many metres there were. The ring master, in scornful accents, replied :

"Of course I do ; there are two, long metre and short metre."

"That just shows how little you know about it ; there are four metres," says the clown.

"Nonsense," replied the other. "I will bet you half a crown there are only two."

"Done," says his tormentor. "There's long metre, short metre, gas metre, and meet-her-by-moonlight-alone."

Then, amid our roar of delight at the perspicacity of our favourite, the ring master, in a frenzy of indignation, cracking his whip, pursues Mr. Merriman round the ring with the intent to inflict condign punishment for such gross impertinence. The pursued one ends the scene by suddenly plunging among the half-price boys and girls adjoining the ring, to their great delight, and says he'll "wait till the clouds roll by." Then the band strikes up again, and the fair equestrienne resumes her dominion over our youthful hearts by her grace and daring. I once saw Tom Barry navigate the River Isis in a washing-tub, the

motive power being six ducks—at least, it was supposed to be—but Tom manipulated a sort of paddle-wheel to assist his progress. On another occasion I saw him drawn into the circus and round the ring by cats. I think, however, we must go further afield than the duck pond and the tiles for suitable substitutes for petrol.

The performance usually finished with an equestrian drama, either “Dick Turpin and Black Bess,” “Billy Button’s Ride to Brentford,” or “Johnny Gilpin’s Ride to Edmonton.” The first-named enlisted our sympathies for a lawless highwayman, and moved us almost to tears when his faithful mare succumbed and was carried out of the arena on hurdles to slow music amid red fire. The other two scenes afforded us abundant merriment.

During the Crimean War period the *grand pièce de résistance* was always a representation of the latest engagements of the Allied troops, and, in a tremor of excitement, I witnessed the battles of Alma, Balaclava, and Inkermann fought over again. They consisted chiefly of thrilling hand-to-hand combats waged within the very circumscribed area of the circus ring, in an atmosphere impregnated with the combined odour of gunpowder, red fire, tobacco smoke, naphtha, oranges, and sawdust, with a *soupçon* of the stable thrown in. It was all very real to me, and I feared to think what would happen if, by any mischance, the British forces failed to dash into the arena at the critical moment and save the situation. I need not really have had any qualms, because the moral lessons these dramas brought home to us was the vast superiority of our nation on all occasions, and that one Briton was more than equal to six Cossacks.

Tom Sayers, with all the glamour attaching to him after his fight with Heenan for the championship, ran a circus for a short time, and visited Oxford with it. He, however, declined to recognize any authority superior to himself, under the impression possibly that no one would dare dispute the sovereignty of one with his defensive and offensive resources. The powers-that-be, accepting all risks of being challenged to a physical combat in order to settle the matter, issued the following notice—a copy of

which is now before me—signed by the Vice-Chancellor and Proctors :

“ A person named Sayers having announced his intention of opening a circus in Oxford, and not having obtained permission from the Vice-Chancellor and the Mayor to do so, members of the University *in statu pupillari* are warned not to attend the aforesaid exhibition.”

In view of Tom's opinion of his own prowess and that his fame had rung through the world, it was something like adding insult to injury to describe him as “ a person named Sayers.” To his admirers it was equivalent to speaking of the great Duke as “ a person named Wellington.” Although this embargo impoverished the attendance somewhat, it did not result in the entire exclusion of junior members of the University, many of whom were present, artfully disguised as navvies and such-like, thus evading the notice of the lynx-eyed proctors on the lookout for them. There was nothing to prevent my patronizing the show, and so, as I always had a hankering for gazing upon the countenances of celebrities, I went. What's more, I was introduced by a mutual friend to the redoubtable Tom, who graciously unbent to the extent of holding my hand in his grip. To look at, he was a fleshly man in every sense of the term, with the usually flattened nose, indicative of his profession, and with about as much intellectuality of feature as you would expect under the circumstances. I remember on the morning after the great fight, directly I could get out of school, I rushed into the Free Public Library to read particulars of it, and found the place besieged by readers equally anxious for information. It has the distinction of being the last prize-fight reported by the *Times* in detail ; whilst Sayers could claim to be the last and only member of his profession to whom the House of Lords and Commons combined presented a testimonial for achievements in the ring.

The majority of the circus acrobats, jugglers, equilibrists *et hoc genus omne* have migrated to the music-halls, and the horse and his rider, most of them, have gone I know not whither. The circus, like many another institution which has seen better days, is now in the sere and yellow leaf, for

fashion asserts itself in amusements as well as in dress. Those who remember the circus in its palmy days must be daily getting fewer, so, as one of the old brigade, I have put on record my early impressions of it before it passes into final obscurity, in the belief that its one-time popularity entitles it to this recognition.

## CHAPTER XXV

Some Experiences of Crowds—Entry of the Princess Alexandra—The Emperor's Fête Day—Some Loyal Tributes—The Influence of a Great Queen.

**I**N my young days, as well as in after years, I paid frequent visits to London. Anything in the shape of a pageant of national significance was a sure bait to attract me there. On the first occasion on which I travelled to town in order to feast my eyes on an historic procession, I certainly got nearer death's door than, according to my limited knowledge, I had ever been before or have ever been since. On March 7th, 1863, the Princess Alexandra was to enter London, and this was a sight that so appealed to my loyal sympathies that I could not bring myself to forego it.

There had been nothing that could be regarded as a great national demonstration in London for many years, nothing in fact of a special character in this respect since Queen Victoria's Coronation. Consequently neither the authorities nor anybody else prepared for the enormous crowd which gathered to greet the Princess. Two or three circumstances went far to account for this interest. The match was universally approved, and it is safe to say that no Royal betrothal in our country's annals had ever been so popular as this. In the first place, it was not a German alliance—and even in those days England had no great liking for the Teuton—whereas we had a friendly regard for little Denmark. Then all the accounts of the Princess and her belongings were favourable, and the unostentatious home life she and her family led, with its simple air of domesticity, had an appealing force that counted for much. Last, but not least, the bride-to-be, as represented in her photographs, was indeed good to look upon, inasmuch as

hers was a type of beauty which reflected all that was pure and lovable. So not only London but thousands from the provinces turned out to join in the welcome, and to see for themselves if "the sea-king's daughter from over the sea" was really as beautiful as her portrait. To see her, I did not propose to take my chance in the streets. As my train landed me at Paddington about 11 a.m., and the Princess was not expected to pass the spot I intended to make for till between 4 and 5 p.m., I thought I had plenty of time in hand. My objective was the house of a friend in Fleet Street, only three doors from where Farringdon Street cuts it off from Ludgate Hill.

I reached the corner of Fleet Street without much difficulty, and then unconsciously got into a crowd which became denser every moment. Still, as I was only three doors from the haven where I would be, I thought, by dint of a little pushing, I should ere long arrive there. But I found myself absolutely immovable, and no more master of my own motions than if I had been trussed. This to start with gave rise to a feeling of vexation, as I gazed at the windows of a house where there was a comfortable seat and accompanying refreshments awaiting me, but I might as well have been at Land's End for any chance there was of getting to my destination. Soon alarm took the place of vexation, and my one desire was to get out of the crowd at any cost. It did not take long to realize that this was an absolute impossibility, for I was so tightly wedged I could not move an inch, whilst my arms were firmly pinioned to my sides. The pressure increased until I feared that my ribs, which were aching for all they were worth, would be stoved in. Knowing that some hours must elapse before I could get relief, I began to doubt whether I should last out, and then my sight failed me, and I found myself in total darkness. I was sufficiently conscious to wonder whether I had lost my sight permanently or only temporarily, and I said to myself, "Unless you can pull yourself together you are a dead man." So I made a great effort of will, in the conviction that my life depended upon it, and gradually my sight returned. Some time after that, I lost it again, though for a shorter period. On any

such occasions one generally dreads rain, but I was deeply thankful for the reviving effects of a sharp shower.

At last, the gradually-nearing cheers gave notice that the procession was approaching, and, what was much more important to me, that the hour of my deliverance was near at hand. Then, amid a scene of unparalleled enthusiasm, the carriage, wherein sat the bowing and smiling Princess, made its way past us, and all who saw her realized that her portraits had done her less than justice. Then the crowd dispersed, and though aching in every limb and in my ribs especially and limp as a rag, I was permeated by a feeling of the deepest thankfulness for my preservation. In order to do justice to the occasion, I had arrayed myself in my very best clothes, with a new pair of tight-fitting, lemon-coloured kid gloves. In the crowd my hands were not sufficiently at my own disposal to allow of my dispensing with the gloves, and so great was the suffocating heat that when I was released they were so saturated with perspiration that I couldn't get them off. I looked such a poor, dishevelled wreck that I had not the heart to present myself at the house I started to reach. I had had nothing since an early breakfast, and it was now past five o'clock, so I made an effort to obtain something to eat, but all in vain, for money couldn't buy so much as a sandwich. London, so far as hotels and restaurants were concerned, was practically cleared out of food, for no one had imagined there was going to be such an abnormal demand for it.

Then, when pretty well played out, by marvellous good luck, I suddenly ran across, in the midst of the throng, a friend, who dragged me off to his home, happily quite handy, and supplied all my bodily needs. Then, reinvigorated, and with the recuperative power of youth, I set out to view the illuminations, and tramped through the streets till it was time to take a train home, some time after midnight. In my old age, I am glad to think that I witnessed the first coming amongst us of one whom the nation, with a perception and a spontaneity which time has amply justified, took to their hearts at once; that she has held a place there ever since goes for the saying. Never in the

annals of England, or of any other country, was such a reception given to any bride-elect. Yet I would not go through another such an experience as befell me that day for all the wealth of the Indies. I have been in some tight places in my time, but never in one equal to it. I was afterwards told I had hit upon the worst spot for a crowd in all London in the narrow opening of Fleet Street and opposite Ludgate Hill.

The spontaneous enthusiasm never faltered throughout the whole route traversed by the little procession of half a dozen carriages, and the usual escort of Life Guards, for it was in no sense a pageant. In Trafalgar Square, the populace completely surrounded the carriage containing the Princess, which rocked about like a ship in a storm, and was in great danger of being overturned under the pressure, but no harm came of it, for the people were not rowdy, and only desired to do honour to the occasion. In fact, the general behaviour of the crowd was exemplary, especially when one considers how little subject they were to restraint.

Curiously enough, some years afterwards, I was again in jeopardy of my life through getting into a crowd. In the days of the Empire, I visited Paris two or three times, and saw it when it was the arbiter of fashion and the quintessence of gaiety. Life there had all the exhilaration of champagne, with its sparkle and bubble, and then, as often happens to those who imbibe too freely of the seductive liquor, came the aftermath—the headache in the case of an individual, the heartache in the case of a nation. This, however, is anticipating, and no such reflections oppressed me when I found myself at the recognized seat of frivolity. More than once I was in Paris during the grand fêtes which, in those days, annually celebrated the establishment of the Napoleonic regime. The illuminations, fireworks and general festivities were all on an imposing scale, as the State paid the piper, and, knowing that the best way, failing a war, to keep Paris quiet, was to keep it amused, no expense was spared to this end. This naturally brought into the streets not only all Paris but also attracted a vast number of visitors from

the provinces. At night the long avenues of the Champs-Élysées were one blaze of light from the Place de la Concorde to the Arc de Triomphe, and the effect of the many-coloured festoons of lamps amid the foliage was far more suggestive of fairyland than anything else. On the occasion in question, being in charge of a lady, I thought it inadvisable to go after fireworks, where bangs and crowds are sometimes trying to the feminine nerves, so we were content to feast our eyes upon the illuminations, and were enjoying the sight in the Place de la Concorde, where the climax of gorgeous brilliancy was reached, when the crowds were returning from the fireworks, of which there were two or three separate displays in different parts of the city. Moved by a common impulse, the great mass of the spectators thereat made for the Place de la Concorde, which is, or was then, surrounded by a stone balustrade, with comparatively narrow openings here and there to allow of traffic through to the Champs-Élysées.

Before we had time to realize what was happening, the converging crowds poured into the Place. Fortunately we were driven close up to the outer balustrade, so that we escaped the swaying of the mass of humanity near the centre. We were tightly pressed against the stonework by an enormous crowd, which found itself packed, like sardines in a tin, within the barriers of the square. All might have been well if the imprisoned ones had kept their heads, but instead they became panic-stricken, and the Place was soon a perfect pandemonium. The air was rent with shrieks and agonizing cries, and many women nearest to the balustrade were pulled by their heads out of the crowd by men on the top of the stonework. The difficulty was to get them out of the danger-zone in this way without setting them on fire, because the outlines of the balustrade, over which they had to be dragged, were marked out in gas-jets. Having my back to the stonework, I had been able to raise my companion so far above the level of the crowd that she had breathing space. But the sights and sounds were almost too much for her, and she told me she was about to faint. I conveyed to her, in the tones of a stern taskmaster, that if she did she would never come

out of that crowd alive, and she had enough self-command to stave off what was most to be dreaded.

We had a lucky escape, for a large number of persons were trampled to death in the Place and many more were seriously injured. When the pent-up multitude got free, the space was strewed with clothes of every description, which had been torn off the backs of the hapless wearers, and for hours afterwards students and others perambulated the streets, carrying portions of women's costumes on poles, to the accompaniment of ribald songs; a proceeding which, in view of the night's fatalities, very much disgusted me. Several public buildings received the dead, and the day after the catastrophe I saw an extended queue of hundreds of persons filing into the Morgue, where were exposed many of the bodies of those who had perished. It was afterwards ascertained that the real cause of the catastrophe was due to a number of pickpockets, who organized a panic beforehand to facilitate the plying of their vocation. They shouted danger when there was none, and, unfortunately, succeeded but too well in carrying out their infamous design.

The difference between the demeanour of the English and the French crowd was most marked. The steadiness and restraint of the one, even when physically suffering, was such a contrast to the frenzied madness, intensifying the danger tenfold, of the other. I am speaking of Paris in the days of the Empire when the mental balance of the nation was not what it is now. Frenchmen of the present generation are altogether differently constituted. Chastened by the sorrows of 1870 and the purifying influence of a great war, the nation has emerged from its trials with an endowment of qualities which has won for it the admiration of the world, and has enabled them to put up a fight for liberty unsurpassable in its heroism and its steadfastness. The Paris experience sounds the worse of the two I have described, but it was not so in reality, because the tension, both mental and physical, in that case lasted but a short time in comparison with the other. I have been in many crowds since, but without any unpleasant consequences.

I have always had an enthusiastic and whole-hearted

attachment to the Monarchy and something near akin to affection for the great Queen, whose beneficent rule broad-based it upon a people's will. I inherited this from my father, who was the very incarnation of loyalty to the person of the Sovereign when Victoria represented it, though he held her immediate predecessors in but small regard. So I had the particular pleasure in being one of the crowd whenever the Sovereign of my adoration gave her people an opportunity of demonstrating their affection. Thus I saw the memorable procession when the Queen accompanied the Prince of Wales to St. Paul's on Thanksgiving Day after his well-nigh fatal illness. This was an extraordinary demonstration in its spontaneous enthusiasm. Yet all the talk, of which in the seventies there was plenty, of disaffection and the possibilities of a republic as soon as the old Queen went melted into thin air when the heir to the throne was in imminent danger of death; and when the danger had passed there was no limit to the joy of the nation. I saw the Queen again on her way to Westminster Abbey at the first Jubilee, and once more as she passed to St. Paul's at the second celebration, when the undying gratitude of a great people found fitting expression. Again I was present as one of the crowd when her remains were borne to their last resting-place. Nor shall I ever forget that profound hush of sorrow, that reverent silence, more eloquent than words, which was the national tribute to the memory of one who had ruled so well and wisely for so many years. I stood on that occasion for some hours in St. James's Street with my back to the Royal Societies' Club, and standing next to me was a little old gentleman, with whom I got into conversation. He told me he was a member of the Club, and had had a seat allotted to him there at one of its windows.

"But," he said, "I stood on this bit of pavement to see the young Queen go to her coronation, and I thought I should like to occupy the same spot when she was on her way to her burial."

And one could not but respect the sentiment underlying this.

By way of contrast to the universal grief among every class of English-speaking peoples at the passing of Victoria, I recall, when a boy, my father telling me of a very enjoyable picnic he and other friends had when, on the occasion of the funeral of William IV., there was a general shut-up day. I expressed my horror and surprise at people taking holiday at such a time of mourning. My father's reply was that there was no occasion to mourn the death of King William, for it mattered very little to the country whether he lived or died. But the best proof that his successor lived in the hearts of the people was the genuine sorrow of the whole Empire at her death. The Coronation of Edward the Peacemaker and his Consort brought me once more to London, and face to face with a popular outburst of affection, which was full of assured confidence, so splendidly justified, that the Empire had a worthy successor to "Victoria the Good." I made another journey to see the present King and Queen on their way to Westminster, and there was the same demonstrative desire to rejoice that the crown was to be so worthily worn, and the same calm assurance that the destinies of the country were safe in such hands.

As I passed Whitehall it was impossible to avoid some thought of that wintry morning when a King of England stepped out from one of its windows on to the scaffold to meet his death, with such regal dignity as to blot out the memory of many indiscretions. Amid the great throng who saw him go to his death there was never a man to raise a finger on his behalf. Yet now it would have gone hardly with any one in the broad street who had uplifted even his voice against King George V. One could not but also remember that the real, underlying affection for the Monarchy and its representatives was of comparatively recent growth. The fathers of those living could have told of the sad and sordid incidents of a Coronation in their own time, when an English Queen was not permitted to share the honours of the day, and was ignominiously turned away at the very door of the Abbey.

How great a change and how deeply thankful a nation should be for it! It was a day for the indulgence of

sentiment, if there ever were an excuse for it, and so I made my way through the Mall to the memorial of the great Queen, who laid the foundations "broad and deep," of that attachment to the throne which in these days permeates the Empire. One could not gaze upon the memorial of a woman's greatness without something akin to emotion or without a deep sense that her great example had called into being a real living sentiment of loyalty to the reigning house unknown until the sceptre passed into her hands. The face, so full of kindly tenderness as well as queenly dignity, brought home to us that it was the presentiment of one "who, being dead, yet speaketh," and who had a great place in the nation's rejoicing.

Memories of such national celebrations, which, in their whole-heartedness, signify a genuine attachment to the person of the Sovereign as well as to the cause of law and order represented by him, are worth preserving, if only to stir the imagination when the seamy and sordid sides of life become too obtrusive. In this they oft-times fulfil a not unworthy mission, besides being very companionable, whilst they strengthen one's belief in the law-abiding qualities and the stable-mindedness of the people. We do not always realize the responsiveness of a nation till occasion calls it forth, but when the master-poet wrote that "One touch of nature makes the whole world kin," he pictured in a sentence the true inwardness of human sympathy. By kindly deeds, as well as gracious words, our King and Queen have shown how fully they can share the joys and sorrows of the people, and the latter have shown themselves not unmindful of this. And it is this which went far to account for the personal, as well as the national, character of the Coronation rejoicings. This was evident on every hand. The bit of red, white and blue sported by the workers, men and women alike, told it as eloquently as anything, and thousands went home with a recollection of the gracious smile of both King and Queen, and in the full assurance, from previous knowledge, that it represented all that was good and kind.

## CHAPTER XXVI

Some Literary Recollections—Books in the Fifties—Thackeray—Dickens—  
Ruskin—A Glorious Heritage.

SOME of the incidents in this and following chapter were included in an article I contributed some time ago to the pages of the *Cornhill Magazine*, and the proprietors of the latter have very kindly and courteously permitted me to add them to the other personal experiences I am about to narrate.

My father, in addition to holding several public appointments, was a bookseller, publisher, and journalist combined, as well as a writer upon many subjects; hence it is not surprising that some of my earliest recollections relate to books and their writers. He lived at Oxford—and I with him until his death—and had associations with the University as well as the city. Thus environment stimulated such interest in literary matters as came to me by inheritance.

A great change has come over the traffic in books since the early fifties, when the ordinary novel was issued in three volumes at 31s. 6d.—with, of course, a very restricted distribution except through the medium of circulating libraries—and the extraordinary novel, such as Thackeray and Dickens provided, in monthly shilling parts. Thackeray's monthly parts were always in bright yellow wrappers, whilst those of Dickens were of a bluish-green colour. The former, in his earlier works, furnished his own illustrations, whilst the latter relied upon Cruikshank, Hablot Browne and others. I also remember their Christmas books with coloured plates regularly forthcoming from the same writers, and the interest they excited. Now these methods of publication on the part of our chief novelists have gone the way of the three-volume novel at 31s. 6d.

If I were asked to name the book which, within my own and I believe any one else's time, created the greatest sensation when it was first given to the world, I should have no hesitation in replying *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Its success was immediate and extraordinary. It was said that some provincial booksellers filled their windows with copies in the morning, and were sold out by night, but I cannot vouch for the truth of this. The fact that it was one of the earliest works of fiction issued in a cheap form may have had something to do with its sales, but it went through edition after edition at varying prices in an incredibly short space of time, and occupied a position in the public mind, as a topic for conversation, attained by no book before or since. It was notable in another respect, as being one of the first novels issued with a distinct, defined purpose—the abolition of slavery—kept steadily in view all through, and to which everything else was subordinated. In these later days, fiction has frequently been used to draw public attention to national evils, but never so effectively as in the case of Mrs. Stowe's work. As evidence of the hold it had upon the public, I may say that, as a small boy, I went to a large pleasure-fair, where four theatrical shows were all playing versions of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, that being the most attractive dramatic fare they could provide, and I saw the various characters in the book promenading on the front stages. In the old stock-company days, when the manager of a theatre could not entice the public within his doors in any other way, he used to put on either *East Lynne* or *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, one or the other, when all else failed, being an almost certain draw. It holds provincial audiences even now, as for many years a travelling company has been, and I believe still is, playing a version of the book with the special attraction that several of the parts are sustained by real niggers.

Undoubtedly, people nowadays are much more cosmopolitan in their reading than they used to be, and a knowledge of books and their writers is much more diffused than formerly. There was then a much greater disposition on the part of those moving in the higher intellectual circles, especially, to consider that anything outside their own line

of studies was not worth troubling about. This was particularly the case in our older Universities, where the ordinary don lived in such an atmosphere of erudition as precluded his taking any interest in anything literary unless it directly bore upon divinity, classics, or mathematics; modern fiction being remote from his sphere of observation. A remarkable instance of this came within my own knowledge in connection with Thackeray, who visited Oxford in 1852, with a view to delivering there a series of lectures on "The English Humorists." There have been one or two incorrect versions of my story, but I can stand by my own with some confidence, because I derived it directly from my father, who knew Thackeray, and, in fact, made the arrangements for the delivery of the lectures, and so was acquainted with all the circumstances in relation thereto. I may add that Thackeray gave my father a synopsis of the lectures in his own handwriting, and this is enshrined among such other literary treasures as I possess.

Any one desirous of giving any public lecture or entertainment at Oxford has first to approach the Vice-Chancellor of the University with a view to obtaining his permission. In accordance with this, the great author waited upon the august personage in question, whom I well remember, and who is immortalized in that famous novel, *Verdant Green*, which depicted Oxford undergraduate life as it was in the fifties.

Thackeray, having been shown into the Vice-Chancellor's presence, handed the latter his card, and remarked that *he* was Mr. Thackeray, and waited to see what effect this announcement would have. The Vice-Chancellor not appearing to be overawed, Thackeray observed, "You know my name, no doubt." The University dignitary, after an apparent search into the inmost recesses of his memory, remarked that he did not remember ever hearing that name before. This to Thackeray was so incredible that he could not conceive that the Vice-Chancellor had caught his name aright, so he repeated, "Mr. Thackeray," and added, to make the matter quite clear, "the novelist, you know." The Vice, having seemingly braced himself

up for a supreme effort of memory, but without avail, thought the time had arrived when he might elicit some information from the applicant himself, so, in order to enlighten the situation, he said in the blindest of tones, "I cannot recall your name. Are you, sir, a member of the University?" Thackeray, who had never before had the wind so taken out of his sails, almost gasped for breath. But still he had a trump card left, which he had been accustomed to consider would carry all before it wherever the English language was spoken. So, with a quiet smile of supreme confidence, he simply ejaculated, "*Vanity Fair*, you know!" Then at last, to his relief, a look of awakened intelligence manifested itself upon the Vice-Chancellor's countenance, and Thackeray awaited the effusive outburst which would make amends for all. It came in the words—"Yes, yes, I have heard of '*Vanity Fair*,' of course, it is mentioned in the *Pilgrim's Progress*."

This was the last straw, and Thackeray gave it up as a bad job, and contented himself with a request, humbly preferred, and without any further reference to the personality of the lecturer, that he might be allowed to deliver his series of lectures. As the guardian of University law and order had no reason to suppose that the discipline of the place would be prejudicially affected thereby, he graciously gave the requisite permit, and Thackeray went on his way, not exactly rejoicing, but in a state of marvel passing all understanding.

This story may sound incredible nowadays, but I could cap it with others of the same period. It must be borne in mind that the typical don of that day took little cognizance of any world of letters outside his own particular sphere. A work of fiction did not appeal to him unless it were written in a dead language. Now all this is changed, and, as like as not, you will meet the author of the latest masterpiece of fiction at the social board of a Head of a House. Jowett may be said to have done more than any one else to break down the artificial barriers which separated the University, as represented by its accredited heads, from the outer world.

Thackeray renewed his public acquaintance with

Oxford a few years afterwards when he appealed to gown and town alike. He was announced to deliver that lecture from his series upon the *Four Georges* which related to George IV. As may be remembered, Thackeray did not mince matters in his estimate either of that monarch or of his aristocratic friends. The period embraced by the lecture was then sufficiently near our own time to connect some of those who were pursuing their studies at Oxford by no distant ties of relationship with certain of the noblemen reflected upon by Thackeray. Consequently, after the lecture was announced, it began to be rumoured that it was intended to make it somewhat warm for the eminent novelist when he started to discuss the characters of particular individuals. Undergraduates, as is generally known, are no respecters of persons upon such occasions, and could make themselves exceedingly disagreeable, to say the least, if they were so minded.

They mustered in good force at the lecture, and, having greeted Thackeray in a friendly enough spirit when he came upon the platform, waited for developments. The lecturer was not long in supplying one, for he at once disarmed opposition by expressing his great regret that his portmanteau containing his lecture on George IV. had most unfortunately miscarried in the train, so that he would be unable to deliver that lecture.

Fortunately, however, he had the manuscript of his lecture on George II. with him, and he would therefore give them that instead, which he forthwith proceeded to do. The general impression was that either the railway or the lecturer exercised a very wise discretion in the matter. A discourse upon George III. even might have been a little risky, but his predecessor and his Court were too much in the shadowy past for any strictures upon them to ruffle undergraduate susceptibilities. So, although the audience generally did not feel quite so interested in the second Hanoverian as they would have been in the fourth, they bore their disappointment with equanimity, and nothing occurred to cause any undue excitement.

I will add a final reminiscence of Thackeray because it will illustrate a special phase of his character. He has

been described by some as apt to be a little impatient and overbearing ; and in argument perhaps he was. He had his weaknesses, like the rest of us. But those best acquainted with him knew that if, in a moment of irritation, he unintentionally did an injustice in word or deed, he was the first to endeavour to repair it afterwards. He and my father once had a considerable difference of opinion. Under a mistaken impression, Thackeray in the heat of the moment made use of an expression which implied a doubt as to my father's good faith, and the discussion came to an abrupt conclusion in consequence. A few hours afterwards I remember Thackeray hurrying back to our dining-room, having in the meantime learned the true state of the case. Seizing my father by the hand, he said in the old-world and delightful phraseology characteristic of his writings : " Friend, I have wronged thee, and I have come back to say so."

It need hardly be said how heartily the other responded, or how much it intensified his respect for the chivalrous nature of the great writer, who was not above admitting an error and making amends for it. Many a lesser man would have hesitated thus to come down, of his own free will and accord, from his pinnacle in such a case. But that was Thackeray all over.

Of the other great novelist of the Victorian period, Dickens, I can also say something, because my father had business associations with him as well as with Thackeray. Dickens, like Thackeray, had a desire to appear on an Oxford platform, and my father was the medium for compassing this. It was when the late King Edward VII., then Prince of Wales, was pursuing his studies at Oxford that Dickens wished to give a reading there, hoping and anticipating that the Heir-Apparent, who had never heard him read, would be pleased to be present. He was not disappointed in this, for arrangements were made for His Royal Highness to attend, the night fixed being November 5, 1859. After the public announcements of this had been issued, some of Dickens's London friends assured him that it would not be safe to have it then as it was Guy Fawkes night, when law and order were set so much at

defiance at Oxford that no respectable person could venture out after dark on that night when "gown and town" were settling their differences. Things were not really so bad as all this, but, as no one wanted to run risks when such distinguished personages as the Heir-Apparent and a great author were concerned, the date was altered. The Town Hall was the scene of the reading, and in those days, people, I suppose, being less luxurious than they are now, the seating accommodation consisted merely of long forms even in the highest-priced parts of the room. An hour or two before the hour—eight o'clock—fixed for the reading, it suddenly dawned upon some one that His Royal Highness, by virtue of his exalted position, might expect something better than a form to sit on, so a messenger was despatched post-haste to my father's house to beg for the loan of an armchair for the Prince. My father gladly complied by sending one of his dining-room armchairs, of that Early Victorian type represented by mahogany and horsehair. I am pleased to say that that historic piece of furniture is still in the family, for I am the present possessor of the chair in which the late King Edward sat when he first heard Charles Dickens read.

Owing to my father's influence, I was allotted a seat on one of the aforesaid forms only two or three rows behind the Prince. The latter had so recently come into residence that he had not previously attended a public entertainment at Oxford, and we were all somewhat puzzled to know how we ought to receive him, for it must be remembered that, in those days, we did not see so much of royalty as we do now. Some thought that every one ought to rise when he entered the room, while others contended that a bashful youth would feel uncomfortable at such an attention and would prefer to be allowed to glide in without attracting any particular notice. However, the matter settled itself in the most natural way, for the moment his figure appeared in the doorway every one present rose and remained standing until he had taken his seat. He was accompanied by his governor, General Bruce, and Mrs. Bruce, an equerry, and his tutor—a more formidable entourage than is considered necessary nowadays for a

Prince of Wales in *statu pupillari* when he is participating in social functions.

I was only a small boy at the time, but the remembrance of that night will remain with me as long as memory lasts. The reading consisted of *The Christmas Carol* and "The Trial" from *Pickwick*. I can still see, in my mind's eye, the great novelist, with an ivory paper-knife in his hand—the one accessory he allowed himself—seated at the little desk unfolding that exquisite story, wondrous in its humour and its pathos, as we listened spellbound. At one moment I was in tears, at another convulsed with laughter. I can never forget how wonderfully he brought out every point and every little detail; it seemed such a revelation of the author's mind and of his dramatic power. He had histrionic as well as literary genius, and would have been a great actor had he elected to devote himself to the stage instead of literature. He held his audience in the hollow of his hand from start to finish, and he had disappeared from the platform before we were sufficiently recovered to give way to our pent-up enthusiasm and call him back to receive it.

"The Trial" from *Pickwick* formed the second part of the programme, and enjoyable as it was to listen to the rendering of so delightful a piece of unbridled comedy from the lips of the author himself, my mind was too full of *The Christmas Carol* to find room for much else. It is almost unnecessary to say that the Prince conveyed to Dickens in gracious terms the great enjoyment he had derived from his efforts. I afterwards heard Dickens read "The Story of Little Dombey" and "Mrs. Gamp," and appreciated them to the full, but it is the *Carol* that stands out in my mind as the masterpiece of elocutionary feeling.

It was to me a delightful revival of old memories when, on January 6th, 1915, I was privileged to hear the great novelist's son, Mr. Henry Fielding Dickens, K.C., recite *The Christmas Carol* and "The Boots at the Holly Tree Inn," in the Guildhall, Bath, in aid of the British Red Cross Society. The link which connected me with the readings of father and son was strengthened by the request of the promoters of the entertainment that I would add to



THE FIGHT FOR THE PARLIAMENTARY  
CHAMPIONSHIP IN THE SIXTIES



CHARLES DICKENS  
IN THE EARLY SIXTIES



the programme an introductory note, which took the following shape :

“It is safe to say that so long as humour and pathos stir the hearts of men, *The Christmas Carol* will hold a supreme place in the affections of all English-speaking peoples, and will in the future, as in the past, be an abiding stimulus to the best impulses of human nature. In “*The Boots at the Holly Tree Inn*,” our sympathies are enlisted and our affections evoked under somewhat different though still most attractive conditions, for in this most delightful and captivating of childish love-stories there is a delicacy of touch which never ceases to charm. So the Bath public are doubly fortunate in having the privilege of hearing these two masterpieces rendered by one who not only adds a deep interest to the occasion by his near relationship to one of the world’s greatest literary benefactors, but who unites with this that inherited gift of dramatic expression which enables him to do full justice to his theme.”

Any one who had heard the father could not but agree that he had transmitted to his son the full power of holding an audience in thrall by the sympathetic force with which he invested every syllable of the two stories of undying fame. By the kindly thought of the reciter’s host, I had the valued privilege of meeting Mr. Dickens under such happy circumstances as enabled me to add one more treasured memory to those which in my very young days began to cluster around the immortal name he bears.

I have only one pang in connection with Thackeray and Dickens. My father parted with his correspondence with both of them, when I was too young to stay his hand, by handing over all the letters he had from them to some autograph hunter, in ignorance of the fact that, in after years, I was going to be an enthusiastic collector of all such things. However, I obtained one or two interesting epistles of Dickens from other sources, and one is worth reproducing, because it shows the great writer in such a charming light. Dickens, when he wrote the letter, was editor of *Household Words*, and any one who has ever held a similar office can testify to the cares and anxieties which wait upon it, and the oft-times trying and heart-breaking

work of plodding through the MSS. of budding writers in the hope of discovering a grain of gold amid much dross. One can fancy what this must have meant to a man with the imaginative power and such a mastery of English as Dickens. Yet he not only did not shirk it but there are many instances of the kindly consideration he had for young writers and his real desire to help them. The letter in question is an example of his painstaking conscientiousness, and of the time and trouble he would bestow in showing a young writer where he was at fault. A personal friend had sent him a contribution from a lady in the hope that he might find it suitable for the pages of the magazine, and no doubt the would-be contributor trusted that the medium through which her MS. was transmitted to the editor would help it on its way to publication. Dickens did not content himself with the brief intimation "Declined with thanks," but, with a kindly conscientiousness, discharged his duty in a much less perfunctory way, as the following letter shows. The term "Gentle Reader," to which he takes so much exception, was one very much in vogue with some writers at that time.

"Office of 'Household Words,'

"A weekly Journal conducted by Charles Dickens,

"No. 16, Wellington Street North, Strand.

"Monday, Twenty-eighth February, 1853.

"MY DEAR ———,

"It is my misfortune that I can only consider papers offered for insertion here with one plain and direct reference to their suitability to these pages. If I could take any other circumstances into account, I should have a prodigious staff of contributors of great merit in various other capacities, but unfortunately possessing such slender pretensions to appear in print that they would very speedily settle this benevolent Journal.

"The lady who has written the paper I unwillingly return appears to me to have some talent for description, but I am afraid she does not quite distinguish between what is easily written and what is easy writing. A world of patience, labour, and care separates the two. The paper contains a quantity of words and a mustard seed of matter. The constant address to the reader is a tiresome avoidance of any art in saying what is to be said, of which

we have the most wearisome experiences here at least a hundred times a week. But the boy and his mother are very well observed and very well described; and if the sketch had in it any other phases of peasant life, of equal merit in the setting forth, I should be glad to accept it. I don't know what the lady may be able to tell in this regard, nor would I by any means urge her to try once more, for she might well be wide of the mark. But I feel it right to say this much. I would advise her, further, for ever and a day to dismiss the Gentle Reader as a monster of the Great Mud Period, who has no kind of business on the face of the literary earth; to remember, if she sit down to write for a Journal like this, that she is just an English woman, writing the English language for a large English audience, and to consider whether she cannot get on in such an aim without German lines and French words; to forget herself as utterly as the Gentle Reader, and only to remember what she is describing.

“Faithfully yours always,

“CHARLES DICKENS.”

Another letter I have from Dickens was written after his falling out with the publishers of *Household Words*, which resulted in his starting *All the Year Round*, and the letter is dated from that office. At that time there were no Government grants made for the promotion of technical education, and, in order to provide it on the cheap, teachers and others were asked to give gratuitous instruction in their leisure time for the benefit of the other working-classes. This was abhorrent to Dickens, who always laid it down that the labourer was worthy of his hire, and he was the last man to be a party to robbing Peter in order to pay Paul. A certain Mr. Landford Eymie, LL.D., wrote to ask Dickens to advocate this giving of something for nothing in the pages of his magazine, and this is the answer he got, which, like all Dickens's communications, does not lack definiteness:

“Office of ‘All the Year Round,’

“Thursday, November 25, 1869.

“DEAR SIR,

“It appears to me that the non-payment of the teachers, in the case you so well set forth, is a point of vital

weakness in the case. They have as good a right to be paid for their labour as the Working Man has to be paid for his ; and they are not, in their degree, really better paid than he is. I must say that if technical education be of such importance to these recipients as they feel it to be, they are not truly independent (to my thinking) when they take it for nothing from men who can very indifferently afford to give it. And even if they were all men of fortune who could well afford it, the principle would be no less objectionable.

"For this reason I cannot call attention to the effort with unqualified praise.

"Faithfully yours,

"CHARLES DICKENS."

There is good common sense and honest principle in this letter, and it is just as applicable now as it was when it was written.

How real Dickens made his creations to his readers was brought home to me once when I was present at a banquet in the room immortalized as the scene of the celebrated ball described in *The Pickwick Papers*, at the Bull Inn at Rochester. A gentleman sitting next to me was so permeated with the *genius loci*, so realistically did the author bring home the incident to him, that he said to me, "Only to think that Mr. Pickwick *actually* danced in this very room !"

One of the oldest libraries can furnish evidence of the universality of the appeal to the imagination Dickens made in his books. At the Bodleian Library there is a copy of *The Pickwick Papers* in the Russian language which was presented to the Library by an English officer, who found it in the knapsack of a dead Russian soldier who fell in the attack upon the Redan by the British troops during the Crimean War. It is difficult to imagine a foreigner entirely appreciating the cockneyisms of Sam Weller and the truly British peculiarities of the other characters, but the interest of the story and its humorous incidents make an appeal to every nationality and testify to the cosmopolitan nature of the writer's genius. There is, however, a pathos in the thought of the poor Russian soldier, who so appreciated

Dickens that his work was his companion on his campaign, falling by the hand of the author's countrymen.

I have referred to Thackeray and Dickens more particularly because they represented the social-reform side of literature at this period, and left their own mark upon it in this direction. Thackeray was a stern moralist, who dissected the characters of our immediate predecessors as a warning to us and did his best to point out the ignominy of cant and humbug. Dickens, in *Nicholas Nickleby*, and in *Hard Times*, laid bare the evils of our educational and our poor-law systems, and in other of his writings showed himself a social reformer of the most enthusiastic type.

To these must be added one who exercised a powerful influence, although in a somewhat different sphere and in other directions from those named—Ruskin. He took the world by storm with his *Modern Painters*, which may be said to have created nothing less than a complete revolution in modern art and the estimation of artistic qualities, and then he developed into an ardent reformer, dealing with most of the great social problems of the age in which he lived.

I first beheld his face in the early fifties, when, as a small boy, my father took me to hear him deliver a lecture to working-men engaged in erecting the University Museum at Oxford, in which he impressed upon them the dignity, the very sacredness, of their calling. Then, years after, I heard him lecture on Art before a distinguished University audience and when no lecture-room was large enough to accommodate all who flocked to hear him.

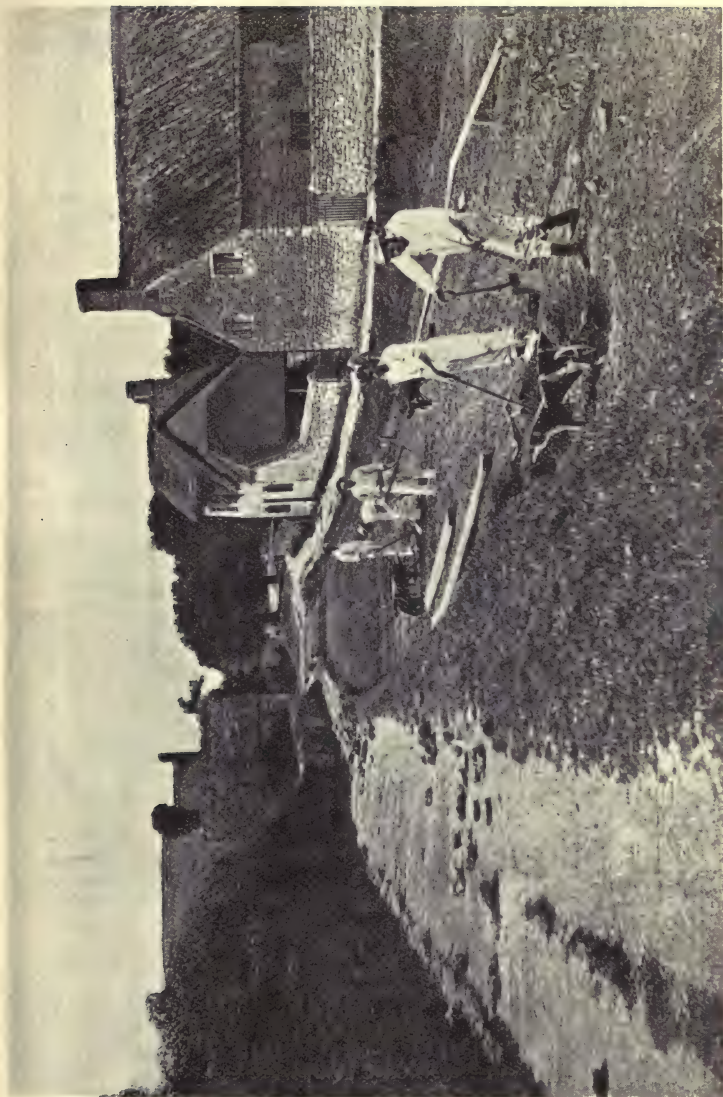
Ruskin in *Modern Painters* said :

“I believe an immense gain in the bodily health and happiness of the upper classes would follow on their steadily endeavouring, however clumsily, to make the physical exertion they now necessarily exert in amusements, definitely serviceable. It would be far better, for instance, that a gentleman should mow his own fields than ride over other people's.”

He followed this up in one of his lectures by intimating that it would be much better if young men, when they took their physical exercise, brought their muscles to bear

upon works of general utility, instead of devoting themselves to cricket, boating, and such vanities. He suggested road-making and repairing as a good form of undergraduate employment for leisure hours, and pointed out a particular spot about two miles out of Oxford as affording a favourable field for operations. Thereupon the more enthusiastic of his votaries took pick, spade, and barrow and proved the sincerity of their hero-worship by literally "working like navvies" day after day in the interval between luncheon and dinner. Ruskin, when he selected the spot in question, certainly had a keen eye for a bad road, if the collection of ruts and irregularities, which resembled a ploughed field in summer and a bog in winter, could be properly described as a road at all. But Ruskin practised what he preached, for I have his own authority for saying that, in order the better to show his pupils how to break stones in the most approved method, he took lessons in the art from a professional stone-breaker and practised them on a stone-heap by the side of his instructor on the Iffley Road, near Oxford.

One fine afternoon I walked over to Ferry Hinksey, where the amateur road-makers were at work, to see how they were getting on. I found a round dozen of them hard at it. There had been twenty or thirty engaged, but some had tailed off before I arrived. They were under the superintendence of "a practical gardener," specially selected for the post by the Art Professor himself. Most of the amateurs were in boating costume, and the embroidery on their jerseys betokened that Balliol College had furnished the largest contingent of workers. They were nearly all rather slightly built and very young-looking even for undergraduates, but, though lacking the physique, muscular development, and unshaven aspect of the professional navvy, they swung their picks and trundled their barrows as though their bread depended upon their exertions. I was not sufficiently acquainted with the mysteries of road-making to be able to give a pronouncement upon their proceedings, but I had the benefit of the criticism of a gentleman in corduroys who, sitting upon an adjacent fence, scornfully delivered himself thus :



RUSKIN'S AMATEUR ROAD-MAKERS AT WORK

The fourth figure from the left, leaning on the pick, is Mr. (now Prof.) Pulling, the historian  
(Reproduced from a photograph by permission of Mr. H. Giles, of 23 Broad St., Oxford)



"Call that makin' a road? Why, they're puttin' all the soft at bottom and the hard at top!"

The work of road renovation was not completed when the long vacation set in, and ere term came round again either the zeal for road-making had evaporated or undergraduate energy had found a new vent. The general impression, however, was that the last state of that road was worse than the first, but this seems impossible. We may well doubt the wisdom of the road-making development of Ruskinism, but at any rate it testified to the influence of the teacher, and, if he were living now, I think it would rejoice his heart to see how many men and women were acting upon the principles he enunciated.

Ruskin's lectures were full of startling surprises, and kept the listeners in a continual state of pleasant curiosity as to what in the world he would say next. Only one thing was quite certain—that you would not hear what you might expect. The spur of the moment was a much more important factor in the case than the subject announced in the printed notice. But matter and manner, however unpremeditated, were always delightful.

I have two or three letters from Ruskin, giving directions as to some drawings, and the minutiae of detail in these letters corresponds with that in his books. He was distinctly a man of moods, and when he was in one of these he would express himself with refreshing frankness. In a postscript to one of his letters in my possession he says:

"Thank you for kind invitation, but I go nowhere just now, being unwell, and sulky, and not able to speak."

In another letter addressed to Robert Browning he said:

"I don't see any use in poetry. They say you are writing more poetry. I dare say I shall be very glad of this—some day—but I don't care just now."

It is something to have seen such a man in the flesh and to have heard his voice. He dwells in my memory, as I saw him pacing that loveliest of streets, "The High," at Oxford—an appropriate setting for such an embodiment of philosophic refinement—mentally preoccupied, and taking little heed of what was passing around him, he walked with slow and measured step, with his hands behind his

back underneath his academicals, and with a slight forward bend of the body. Thus he always struck one as being not unlike a dignified bird, the projection of the gown being suggestive of the tail. His dress was careful and precise, and he invariably wore a bright blue scarf with a pin in the centre. When lecturing, he walked up and down the platform very much like a caged lion, and, as he warmed up to his subject and dealt blows right and left at what he considered the weaknesses and foibles of the time, the force and determination of look and manner were in striking contrast to his calm placidity at ordinary times.

Time has been described as "the most searching of critics," and the writers to whom reference has been made, as well as not a few of their contemporaries, have up to now successfully stood this test, and seem likely to continue to do so until long after the present generation has ceased to interest itself in books. As one looks back through a somewhat long vista of years, one wonders whether the glorious record of the Victorian era in literature will ever be surpassed, for the number and brilliancy of its constellations render it worthy to be recalled in the same breath as that of Elizabeth and Anne. We have, however, one great and immeasurable advantage nowadays in the marvellous cheapness of good books, inasmuch as a score of standard works by the greatest writers of any period can be purchased for less than the price formerly paid for one. This is no small gain, enabling, as it does, every section of the community to have a direct participation in a glorious heritage.

## CHAPTER XXVII

The Transformation of Alma Mater—The Don of the Past—A Mere Soldier  
—An Era of Change—Class Distinctions—The Don of To-day.

WHEN one considers the number of emissaries Alma Mater annually sends forth to serve either Church or State, one can understand the far-reaching influence in the kingdom at large of our ancient universities. Therefore, the conditions under which such bodies exist, and the atmosphere in which those in *statu pupillari* are being reared must always be a subject of interest to the world in general as well as educationists. This may be a justification for any one who, like myself, had some acquaintance with Oxford in the days before Commissions sat in judgment on it, or the spirit of change was a disturbing element, drawing a few comparisons between its past and its present.

The University has often been reproached for not moving fast enough, but sufficient allowances have not always been made for the many long years it was permitted to go its own way without let or hindrance, and the traditions which have gathered round it are the growth of centuries. An American visitor, gazing upon the time-worn walls of University College, said to its Master, "Those buildings must be very old." "No, sir," said the Master, "their colour deceives you, their age is not more than 250 years." Time is not reckoned at Oxford as it is at Chicago.

There has been a great transformation in the personal characteristics of its rulers since the days of Dean Gaisford, of Christ Church, and Dr. Routh, of Magdalen, to whose times my recollection extends. The head of a collegiate house then lived in a little world of his own, whose boundary walls were those of the University, and who only wished and expected to be let alone. He was extremely learned,

in unworldly knowledge, severely orthodox, and particularly long-lived. He was a supreme authority upon points of doctrine, and in this respect recognized no superior. It is said that a don of this description when preaching before the University, after pointing out that St. Paul said so-and-so, remarked, "And I partly agree with him." Whether this story be true or not, it is very characteristic. In matters connected with the government of his college, he, as the ruling authority, brooked no interference, and some of his methods seem nowadays to be a little high-handed. On one occasion the confectioners of the city resolved to interview Dean Gaisford with the view of inducing him to modify certain restrictions he had placed upon their collegiate trade. A member of the deputation thus described to me the result of this so-called interview. The arrival of the deputation having been notified, the party, as they stood expectantly upon the threshold, heard the Dean in solemn accents desire his butler to "show the pastrycooks in." They were accordingly shown in, and, having humbly represented their case, they waited for a pronouncement upon it by the arbiter of their fate. After a moment's pause, it came in the order again addressed to the butler, "Show the pastrycooks out," which was accordingly done. And this was the only answer the deputation ever got. Jove was not going to descend from Olympus to bandy words with ordinary mortals, and it is only fair to the Dean to say that he acted quite in accordance with what was, at that time, regarded as the best traditions.

The head of a house then governed as well as reigned, and took good care to let the fellows, as well as the undergraduates, understand this. Dr. Routh, the President of Magdalen, was very fond of dogs, and kept several about the college. The Vice-President once had the temerity to inform him that the fellows proposed to enforce a standing order forbidding dogs to be kept within the college precincts. "Then, sir," the doctor replied, "I suppose I must call mine cats!" In this spirit, the Sunday after the death of the Duke of Wellington, the doctor gave as a toast, "The memory of our great and good Chancellor, who never erred—except when he was overruled."

Bearing in mind that Dr. Routh was in his hundredth year when he died in 1854, and that he held the Magdalen Presidency for sixty-four years, it is not surprising that he did not take kindly to modern methods. As mentioned in a previous chapter, he very much disliked railways, and declined to take any official cognizance of their existence. He was, indeed, a wonderful link with the past, for he was pursuing his studies at the University while Goldsmith, Reynolds, Garrick, Burke, and Johnson were building up an imperishable fame in London, and he had with his own eyes seen the author of *Rasselas* scrambling up the steps of University College. A gentleman of my acquaintance once called upon Dr. Routh at his residence in Magdalen, and the doctor said to him, "Young man, I have talked in this room to a man who had spoken to James II." He knew two ladies who remembered seeing Charles II. walking with his dogs in the parks at Oxford. This indicates the extraordinarily lengthened period which his life bridged over, and the deep interest which such a personality arouses is intensified by the fact that the all-but centenarian possessed all his faculties up to within a few hours of his death. Dr. Routh had some connection with Bath, inasmuch as he married at Walcot Church, a Miss Blaggrave, who resided with her aunt at 22, Queen Square, and who was one of a single family of twenty children.

As a child, when I used to be taken by the nursemaid "round the parks," as it was termed, for my morning constitutional, I used to see Mrs. Routh going over the same route in a Bath-chair. I stood very much in awe of her, for she looked so very old and so very fierce. The fact that she had a fine and large moustache may help to account for what seemed to me an unusually ferocious expression for one of the gentler sex. At this time her mind was a little unhinged; and she once startled me with a sudden demand, made in a very peremptory tone, to know who I was. Both the nursemaid and myself were too frightened to answer, whereon the old lady made a very strong remark in condemnation of our taciturnity.

Another instance of the length of time a few lives could bridge over was supplied in the person of Dr. Hawkins,

Provost of Oriel College, who was born in 1789 and died in 1882. He had an account of the execution of Charles I. given him by a man who himself had it from a bystander who was present at the execution.

Other heads of houses who lasted on until a later date maintained, in a modified degree, many of the old traditions, but their places know them no more, and a new race has sprung up.

I lived in the days of five Oxford Chancellors : the Duke of Wellington, the Earl of Derby—"the Rupert of debate"—the Marquis of Salisbury, Viscount Goschen, and Lord Curzon, all of whom, except the first-named, I had the privilege of listening to. It was always a subject of regret to me that I never set eyes on my hero of heroes, the "Iron Duke," but I seemed to get almost within the rays of the sun itself when a maiden aunt of mine used to delight my ears by narrating to me how she saw him installed as Chancellor in the Sheldonian Theatre in 1834. His grace made no figure as a classical scholar when he was at school, and had had his mind too much occupied in serving his country to permit of his making amends for this in after-life. My relative used to tell me how he hesitated and stumbled over his Latin greetings to the recipients of honorary degrees, and had to be prompted by the Vice-Chancellor at his elbow. Years afterwards I had a corroboration of this in an autograph letter I once acquired written by the 3rd Earl of Charleville, who died in 1851, to Benjamin Webster, who was for so long the lessee of the Haymarket and Adelphi Theatres. His lordship, who had spent an evening at the Haymarket Theatre, thought it only kindly to represent to the lessee that one of his company, Liston, the celebrated comic actor, had been guilty of a false quantity, and the writer points a moral by saying :

"I remember when the Duke of Wellington was installed as Chancellor of the University of Oxford, he had to deliver his inauguration speech in Latin, and, amongst other false quantities, pronounced the 'o' in Carolus long instead of short. One of the great dons of the University had expressed to me his anxiety to see the hero of a hundred fights.

When we met in the hall the next morning, I asked him what he thought of him, and he replied, 'Oh, nothing in him, a man of no talent, a mere soldier, that's all; made three false quantities. I forgave him the proper name, the others were unpardonable.' Now, as dons and scholars frequent the little theatre, pray induce the addition (Mr. Liston) you have made to your company to pronounce the 'o' in Asmodeus long instead of short, as he did on Monday, lest he be harshly judged by the dons."

This letter seemed to be sufficiently interesting, in view of all the circumstances, to be worth publishing for the first time, especially as it links in association the great Duke with that theatrical mirth-provoker, Liston: a most comic conjunction. My main object, however, in submitting the epistle is that it might illustrate the point that many dons of the old type regarded all knowledge outside Theology, Greek and Latin, with mathematics in a minor degree, as a mere superfluity. The Carolus mispronunciation referred to in the letter was followed by a supplementary error. The "hero of a hundred fights," finding he had made a mistake in pronouncing the "o" long in Carolus, when he came to Jacobus thought the same rule would apply in that case, and so further put his foot in it by making the "o" short.

However, so far as the large majority of his hearers were concerned, they lost sight of everything but his magnificent achievements on the field of Mars, and the eyes of my relative, a dear old soul, long since passed away, used to sparkle as she waxed enthusiastic over the striking scene of the installation, with the Duke in his splendid robes of black and gold in the midst of the great gathering, which filled every nook and corner of the spacious building. The subject of the prize poem on that occasion was "The Hospice of St. Bernard," which afforded scope for a reference to Napoleon and his battles. The recital of four lines of the poem was the culminating thrill of the day's proceedings. Skilfully leading up to his dramatic point in the preceding lines, the poet, as he stood in the rostrum, suddenly turned towards the Chancellor, and with all the force at his command delivered himself as follows:

“ When on that field, where last the Eagle soared,  
War’s mightier Master wielded Britain’s sword :  
And the dark soul the World could scarce subdue  
Bowed to thy Genius, Chief of Waterloo.”

My relative used to delight in recalling these lines, so impressed upon her memory, and in describing the extraordinary demonstration they elicited. Their effect was electrical, the whole audience rose, and a scene of the wildest enthusiasm ensued, the cheering being again and again renewed as though there would be no end to it. The only person present absolutely unmoved was the Duke himself, who at last had to motion the poet to continue his recitation before silence could be restored. I have always been glad to have had a first-hand description of so notable and soul-stirring a demonstration. I remember, with similar pleasure, the late Canon Phillpotts, entertaining me with a graphic account of the visit of the Duke and the Allied Sovereigns to Eton in 1814, when the Canon was at school there. The reverend gentleman came under the mastership of the flogging Keats, and probably suffered at his hands, though I did not like to press this question home. I doubt if there is any one living now who could tell me as much as the Canon did of those times.

In 1854, through the medium of Lord John Russell’s famous Commission, was applied the first pressure from the outside in the direction of reform, and very heartily such an inquiry was anathematized as unjust and uncalled for by those who resented any interference by Parliament with their system of government ! Some college authorities declined to answer any inquiries addressed to them by the Commissioners. Dr. Gaisford, as Dean of Christ Church, would not even acknowledge receipt of their communications, and Dr. Routh, as President of Magdalen, abruptly dismissed the matter with the reply, that he was not aware that he had misused his college revenues. But the spirit of progress was not to be denied, and an era of change set in. The Parliamentary legislation resulting from the Commission was not only important in its immediate effects but sufficiently far-reaching to pave the way for future action. Consequently, the next Commission in 1872 aroused much less antagonism, and had the benefit

of much more willing assistance than was rendered to its predecessor. Even those whose prejudice against the University runs strongest must admit that since then it has, on its own initiative, done a great deal to adapt its policy and methods to modern requirements, although this has involved the abandonment of many cherished traditions, and the adoption of points of departure which many predicted must inevitably lead to disaster.

Many are the changes which my own memory can compass. The area of studies has been enlarged, and to an extent which forcibly suggests how circumscribed it originally was, and examinations have correspondingly multiplied; religious tests have been abolished; open competition has been generally applied to fellowships and scholarships; new colleges, representative of Nonconformity as well as the Established Church, have come into being; the right-hand of fellowship has been held out to students owning no allegiance to either college or hall; women students have been welcomed and provided for in halls; educational emissaries, in the shape of University extension lecturers, have brought something at least of what Alma Mater has to bestow to the very doors of those outside her boundaries; the need of systematized examinations for the benefit of the youth of the middle-class especially has been recognized and met; science, instead of being regarded, as it was, as an unwelcome intruder, has been accorded an honourable status. Although this by no means exhausts the catalogue of important measures which have helped to revolutionize but not to destroy Oxford, it is sufficient to show that the University is not, in these latter days, at least, the obstructionist that some would make her out to be.

The inevitable ruin of the University in general and the certain demoralization of the youth in its charge were again and again predicted when changes such as these came under discussion, yet they may claim to have done something for the promotion of plain living and perhaps of high thinking. The undergraduate of to-day certainly works more and spends less than did his predecessor in the forties.

Under the new influences, the class distinctions which

the old system fostered and encouraged are much less pronounced, and the sprig of nobility is no longer marked out by the superiority of his academic attire as a special object for admiration. As evidence of his rank he wore, when I first saw him, on all ordinary occasions, a much more expensive gown than did those of lesser degree, while his trencher cap, instead of being covered with common cloth, and having an unobtrusive black tassel, was of good velvet with an imposing gold tassel. On State occasions he was so gloriously apparelled in gold lace and plum-coloured silk that, in the matter of costume, he threw into the shade even the Chancellor himself. Lord Rosebery was one of the last of the undergraduate noblemen whom I saw thus gorgeously robed. If you were not a nobleman, and yet desired to wear something distinctive, you could, if you were content to pay higher fees for the privilege, enter under the title of a gentleman-commoner. Then you could wear a velvet cap—but no gold tassel—and a gown of superior make to that worn by undergraduates generally. These distinctions, however, no longer exist.

But if affluence or social position was thus outwardly indicated by the wearers' habiliments, so also was the converse. Youths who gained exhibitions, and consequently were in receipt of pecuniary assistance from the University, were in several colleges styled "servitors," and were treated as though they were of an inferior grade to the ordinary undergraduate. In order further to mark this it was ordained that they should wear different gowns of poorer quality than the rest of the students. This distinctive costumewas abolished throughout the University by vote of Convocation in 1855, but Dean Liddell had previously set a good example by dispensing with it at Christ Church. The term "servitor" has now disappeared, "exhibitioner" being substituted for it.

It was probably not intended that some of the penalties exacted by the authorities for undergraduate backslidings should press much more hardly upon the needy than upon the affluent offender, but they certainly did. A favourite form of punishment for minor breaches of discipline was to require the transgressor to write out so many hundred

lines of a classic author. This, on the face of it, was not a particularly irrational form of penalty, but its efficacy, in the case of the well to do, was somewhat discounted by the fact that, as long as the lines were duly produced at the proper time, nobody went into the question of handwriting. Consequently, those who could find the cash to pay a scribe did not trouble to execute the task themselves. Some of the citizens, and one in particular, who was a good classical scholar, and had a special reputation for the accuracy and despatch with which he executed such orders, did a thriving business in writing out impositions. But the paid scribe's occupation is now gone, for the authorities have devised means—as Gilbert put it—"to make the punishment fit the crime" with greater exactitude.

The don of to-day bears little resemblance to his predecessor. He need hardly be described, he is so much in evidence all over the world. You may meet him on the top of a mountain or the top of an omnibus, at the bottom of a coal-mine, or up in an aeroplane. Unlike his predecessors, he does not consider that theology, classics, or mathematics are the only things worth living for, or that there is no world to speak of outside Oxford. He is cosmopolitan in his tastes, and has been known to run up to town for a classical concert, a picture show, or a theatrical *matinée*. He sets, rather than follows, precedent, and therein lies the essential difference between himself and the rulers he succeeded. The latter tolerated rather than approved of boating, cricket, and athletics in general, as tending to distract attention from more important matters. But the typical head of to-day makes no secret of his pride in the success of his college eight or eleven, and is often a spectator of their triumphs or defeats. The names of Craddock, of Brasenose, and Evans, of Pembroke, will occur to old Oxonians as pioneers of the new methods, which took official cognizance of play as well as of work. They in particular dealt tenderly with a man who was a success in the field or on the river, even though he brought little credit to his college in the schools; but a loafer, who was good at nothing but loafing, was their abomination. Jowett did a great deal to break down the barriers which

separated Oxford from the outer world by the cosmopolitanism of his invitations, for he sat at meat at the Balliol high-table with all sorts and conditions of men, who, so long as they were distinguished in some reputable walk in life and lived up to a reasonable moral standard, were his welcome guests.

The preceding remarks have referred to the don *in excelsis*, the head of a house, but the professorial don is also entitled to some consideration. Time, in conjunction with two Parliamentary Commissions, has, in his case, done much to change both the man and his methods. He has increased and multiplied exceedingly, as the University curriculum of studies has widened and broadened, and he has undergone, to use a modern colloquialism, considerable "bustling up." Many professors of the older school never attempted to teach except through the medium of the books they published, and they regarded their stipends, apparently, as merely an endowment of research. In fact, the University Commissioners in 1852 described professorial teaching as almost non-existent.

The energy of the modern teacher has reacted upon the taught, and the influence exercised, though in entirely different directions, by such teachers as Liddon, Jowett, and Ruskin, can hardly be over-estimated. Nor were these exceptional instances.

The enthusiasm which Liddon kindled, and the personal affection he engendered, were strikingly displayed at every opportunity. Those who were present will not soon forget the demonstration of feeling in the undergraduates' gallery in the Sheldonian Theatre when the Chancellor welcomed him to a seat among the doctors, *honoris causa*. He could not only attract men to his lecture-room, when it was on the road to the schools, but he could gather them round him in crowds on Sunday evenings in his rooms in Christ Church for the sake only of the man and his subject.

Jowett may be said to have popularized Greek at Oxford, and when, on account of his theological opinions, Convocation rejected a proposition to increase the miserable stipend of £40 attached to his professorship, his old pupils raised, by private subscriptions, £2000—which, however, he did



AN OXFORD CARICATURE OF RUSKIN  
AS THE PROFESSOR OF ROAD-MAKING  
*Reproduced from a drawing by F. L. Hill*



not feel able to accept—for presentation to him : a tangible proof of the permanency of his influence.

Art had comparatively few votaries at Oxford, and, in fact, was regarded by many as a subject alien to the place, when Ruskin was appointed as its first professor, and played the part of the fairy godmother to the Cinderella of studies. He brought it out of obscurity into prominence, and invested it with a character and status to which it had previously been a stranger.

Previous to the appointment in 1856 of Sir F. Gore Ouseley, as Professor of Music, the art was at a very low ebb in the University, for there was little or no official encouragement, and neither the chair nor the musical degree was of any repute. It is true that a distinguished composer, Sir Henry Bishop, occupied the chair, but it was mainly an honorary appointment, the stipend attached to the office being merely nominal, so he did not lecture and rarely visited the University. At his death the stipend was largely increased, and a singularly felicitous appointment was made in the choice of Sir F. Ouseley as his successor. He became an active living force, and his remarkable talent and energy raised music to a position it had never previously occupied at Oxford, and the high standard he set up for the degree greatly enhanced its value.

A moving spirit in that progressive policy which has done so much to bring the University into closer touch with the country at large was Sir Henry Acland, and he is also entitled to be gratefully remembered by a citizen, like myself, for his constant efforts to promote a good understanding between gown and town in the face of old antagonisms. Devoted as he was to the University, of which he was so distinguished an alumnus, he never forgot that he was a citizen also. With his persuasive force, which could do so much to ensure a favourable reply, he at every opportunity put to the University the question, "And what, in particular, can we do for the city in whose midst we live?" Hence it was mainly owing to his forethought and advocacy that the University treasure-houses, its museums, libraries, and lecture-rooms were made much

more available than they had been to outsiders and to Oxford citizens in particular. Trusted by both gown and town, he was a connecting link between the two, and thereby a powerful agent in the cause of peace and amity.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

Some Recollections of a Church-goer—The Dawn of a Belief—Religious Gloom—Early Church-going—St. Martin's—Church Cakes—Church Wanderings—The Tractarian Movement—Theological Battles.

**O**WING to the delicacy of the subject and the difficulty of treating it without arousing latent susceptibilities and stirring up the embers of controversy, I was in two minds as to whether I would write this chapter at all, and, as it is, I have left it nearly to the finish. But I felt that, if I let it be inferred that the ordinary citizen stood altogether aloof from the religious movements of his age, I should be doing him an injustice, and, in addition, the Victorian period could not be truly pictured if no count were taken of such movements and their effect upon the individual. So I determined to run all risks and round off my narrative with such personal experiences as have befallen me in relation to a subject which, after all, concerns us far more intimately than any other.

On looking back, one can see how much one is the creature of circumstances during the formulation of a belief, upbringing and environment being such important factors in the case. The more this is realized, the more tolerant it should make us of those whose creeds, even if they be poles asunder, do not synchronize with our own.

The workings of a child's inexperienced mind, when first faced with conditions and problems to which it is a stranger, are worth recalling in after years, if they help to a better comprehension of some of the trials incidental to the spring-tide of the thinking powers. "The happy days of childhood" has passed into a stereotyped phrase, mainly owing to a natural disposition to consign early troubles to the limbo of forgetfulness. Arising out of this

is the supposition that children do not ever think enough to worry themselves much about either the known present or the unknown future. This often results in misunderstandings so deeply graven on an impressionable mind as to last a lifetime. Thus I think, judging from my own experience, that those in authority, bearing in mind the conditions inseparable from childhood, should, when dealing with children, endeavour to inculcate the doctrine of love rather than fear in relation to the Almighty. We have not yet entirely outgrown the old idea of a Deity as the dispenser of punishments, who must be frequently propitiated. This finds illustration in the view taken by many conscientious, but, I venture to think, mistaken persons, who urge the holding of services not merely of prayer, but of humiliation on account of the War, with a view to mitigating Divine wrath. We should rather, I take it, lift up our hearts in a spirit of deep thankfulness to Almighty God for His Goodness and Mercy in permitting us to be the instruments of truth, honour and righteousness, at the same time praying Him to guide our footsteps aright in the path we had elected to tread.

I agree with the Bishop of London when he said : " People say the War was sent because of our sins. I cannot forget that if we had been a little more sinful we should not have been at war at all."

One of my earliest recollections is that of sitting by the side of my mother and hearing for the first time that " sweet story of old " as read and explained by her. It arrested me, and I was indebted to it for the first dawns of a belief, which started with nothing more than an intense feeling of pity for One Who suffered so much. The significance of the gospel it represented, and how great was the Saviour's sacrifice on our behalf, could not be grasped until long after. My first-formed conception of the Almighty was that of a Great Judge, and at a time when the terrors of hell were made more of than they are to-day, I feared Him accordingly. My mother was an Evangelical of the old school, having been so brought up, and this meant a very strictly defined creed, any deviation from which involved a terrible penalty ; yet she was one of the

most tender-hearted and self-sacrificing of women, who would not intentionally have harmed a fly.

When the Crimean War was raging, Evangelical Christendom was in expectation of the Second Coming at no distant date, and the consequent dissolution of the World. This belief was not a little stimulated by the writings of the celebrated Dr. Cumming, who confidently prophesied the end of all things temporal as likely to occur at any moment between 1848 and 1867. His tracts, with such terrifying titles as "The Seven Last Vials," and his commentaries on the Gospels, were pregnant with woe, and calculated to arouse the direst forebodings in the breasts of grown-ups, let alone children. These works were issued in monthly parts, which my mother took in and read to me on Sunday evenings. They made me extremely uneasy, so much so that I dreaded going to bed, in the fear that my fate would be sealed before daybreak.

My father was not present at these readings, and I remember, when he came in just after one of them, calling out in an agony of terror that probably we should all be burnt up before morning. He calmed my fears by assuring me that he believed that the world would last his time and mine too, and, as I had a great respect for my father's opinion upon any point, I thought he was more likely to be right than Dr. Cumming, and this comforted me not a little. After that, my mother used to read to me *The Pilgrim's Progress*, which I much preferred to the doctor's prophecies, or explained the pictures in our big Family Bible. The prophet long outlived the date when his prognostications should have materialized, and years afterwards, when I was in London, I went, out of curiosity, to hear him preach at the National Scottish Church. There was nothing to alarm one either in his sermon or his appearance. So far from being of the Solomon Eagle type, he was a meek-and-mild-looking little man in spectacles, denunciatory neither in words, voice, nor action.

A good deal of the religious teaching, at the time of which I speak, was enshrouded in gloom, though, happily, the clouds have lifted a good deal since, as the necessity of sunshine as an aid to belief has been better realized.

The depression existing then in spiritual affairs was illustrated by an exhibition I was taken to see. It consisted of three large-sized pictures painted by that erratic genius, John Martin. They represented "The Judgment Day," "The Great Day of His Wrath," and "The Plains of Heaven." To me, they were most awe-inspiring and catastrophic, particularly the two first-named, which filled my mind with grave forebodings. Vivid as Martin's imagination was, neither he nor any other mortal man could possibly be equal to such subjects. I remember that the family verdict was that the artist was "a bit presumptuous," inasmuch as he went so far as to select certain historical personages as suitable for consignment to the lower regions, and depicted them on their way thither. However, crowds went to see the pictures, which made an exhibition-tour of the principal towns. They were sufficiently popular to be reproduced in mezzotint, and every now and then my recollection of them is revived by my meeting with copies at print-sales, though without any desire whatever to possess them. The effect of such representations upon my young, untutored mind, was to strengthen my impression that the Almighty was the embodiment of severity. Hence I think that, on that account, as well as because of their morbid tendency, such works of art are best kept out of the way of young children.

I have dwelt upon this particular phase of religious thought because it was so prevalent at that time, before the doctrine of Eternal Hope began to be more fully recognized as at present. In childhood, we may be terrorized into being good on account of what awaits us hereafter if we are not, or we may be deterred from evil by reminders of the glories of Heaven. But in after-life, these considerations are superseded by more powerful impulses, and we are called upon to decide between good and evil, apart from the question of future rewards or punishments. The soldier who goes forth amid a storm of bullets to rescue a wounded comrade is actuated by a far finer motive than the mere desire to purchase immortality. The hope of reward, whether it be Paradise,

or the Victoria Cross, is not the over-mastering force which impels to heroic deeds, nor should it be. There is nothing to lead us to believe that the Good Samaritan had any thought in his mind beyond that of brotherly love and of duty towards his neighbour, and if a man practises this, he cannot be far off Heaven, whatever his creed.

I was taken to church at so early an age that I had to be placed upon two hassocks, one on the top of the other, in order that I might see over the ledge of the high pew. I freely admit that I did not then go to church from choice, but simply because I was taken by those in authority, and that I found the proceedings inordinately long and tedious. I did not understand the service, and perfectly remember my feeling of puzzlement at the conduct of the congregation, who frequently all gave tongue at once, and, as it seemed to me, interpolated remarks of their own, instead of listening quietly to the clergyman. As I had always been told to keep perfectly still in church, I could not understand these noisy outbursts on the part of the rest. My parents, when I called their attention to this, failed for some time to comprehend what I was driving at. At last they understood that what scandalized me was the participation of the congregation in the Psalms, which in those days were usually said and not sung, and their joining in the Litany, responses, etc. It was explained that this was quite in order, and I had to be satisfied with this assurance, though until I began to understand the service it did not sound very reasonable. I mention this incident as showing the virgin state of my mind at this time, and as some evidence that in my old age I have not lost touch of the thoughts and doubts which possessed me at this early stage of my existence.

I greatly feared any breach of decorum on my own part while within the sacred edifice, and remember how frightened I once was at the thought that I had, although unintentionally, grievously sinned in this direction. It was an extremely wet Sunday, and, on entering the church, I had to maintain a tight grip upon an umbrella with one hand and upon a prayer-book with the other. My attention being thus distracted, I walked right up the centre

aisle to our pew without removing my head-gear, and never discovered this until I had taken my seat. I shall never forget the feeling of horror that possessed me after realizing the sacrilege of which I had been guilty, unconscious though it was, and the dread of its consequences.

St. Martin's, or, as it was commonly called, Carfax Church, at Oxford, was my first place of worship; it was the City Church and officially recognized as such. The parish of St. Martin, in which the early portion of my life was spent, was very singular in its ecclesiastical arrangements. We had a rector, certainly, but he had no right, *as* rector, to occupy his own pulpit on any Sunday in the year. For preaching purposes, there were four Divines known as City Lecturers, and each occupied the pulpit on a Sunday morning and evening once a month. In order that the rector might have an opportunity of addressing his flock on one Sunday in the month, it was customary to appoint him to a lectureship as soon as a vacancy occurred, but this might not happen for a considerable time after his acceptance of the living. The appointment to the lectureships was vested in the Town Council—hardly an ideal body for the purpose—and, the emoluments being liberal, there was always a plentiful supply of candidates forthcoming.

Several distinguished University men were lecturers during my time, and yet there is only one of their sermons of which I retain any distinct recollection, and that was preached by the Rev. Octavius Coxe, afterwards Bodley's Librarian. I can still hear his deep, sympathetic voice giving out the text: "But, he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness." There was such a ring of sincerity in his tone when he uttered this text that my attention was fixed at once, and as, in no uncertain terms, and in language which a small boy could understand, he made clear the ground of St. Paul's confident belief, he did something to bring home conviction to me in a way that has lasted until now. As I listened, how little did I think that, years afterwards, he would be, as I have already explained, my honoured chief in the world of books!

In those days the clerk was a much more important personage than he is now. His powerful voice not only led us in the responses, but was brought into action in other parts of the service, for he announced the hymns and read the first verse of each. It is interesting to note that at the time of which I speak our clerk was the father of the historian, John Richard Green, who wrote the famous *Short History of the English People*, and other works. The Sunday morning service was of much longer duration than we are accustomed to nowadays. Included in it, in addition to the usual prayers and lessons, were the Litany and Commandments, together with, preceding the sermon, a long "bidding-prayer," in which the Parliamentary Members for the City, the Recorder, Mayor, Sheriff, Aldermen and other members of the Corporation were duly prayed for, whilst the sermon never erred on the side of brevity. The organist, too, did his best to fill up time, for he not only played the Corporation in and out, but started each hymn by playing the tune in full, and followed this up with original variations upon the same theme between each verse. The sermon was preached in a black gown, and one of the lecturers always wore black gloves as well, which seemed quite appropriate, as his remarks were always of a particularly gloomy nature.

Happily, in view of the length of the service, there was a privacy about the pews, which were high and box-like, very conducive to restfulness. The pulpit was of the old three-decker type, the clerk being on the lower deck, the rector on the quarter-deck, and the lecturer high up in the conning tower, whence he could survey the whole church and look down upon the Mayor and Corporation beneath him. The latter attended the church in state every Sunday morning and evening, and on such other days, commemorating the Restoration, the Accession, the Discovery of the Gunpowder Plot, etc., as used to be observed. On Easter, Whit and Trinity Sundays, the Mayor and Aldermen came in their scarlet robes instead of the black ones ordinarily worn. It was formerly the custom, though before my time, for the Mayor every Sunday to entertain at dinner the preacher of the day and all those members

of the Corporation who attended his Worship to church. The dinner was at two o'clock, and lasted, with dessert, until four, when the whole party again went to church, there being then no evening service. There was a reminiscence of the dinner remaining in my own day. At the conclusion of the service, the civic procession, on its way out, halted at the foot of the pulpit stairs. The preacher then descended from his elevation, and, joining the Mayor, was escorted by the latter to his parlour at the Town Hall, just as he used to be when he partook of his Worship's hospitality. I knew very well one of the last of the Mayors who practised this hospitality.

Among other ancient customs observed in the parish was one I never heard of elsewhere, but which, when I was a child, appealed strongly to my sympathies. On every Holy Thursday, the churchwardens, at the expense of the parish, sent round to every parishioner a bag of cheese-cakes, the number of cakes being proportioned to the extent of the family in each case. This is an age of investigation, which takes little upon trust, and some one, who must have been an old bachelor, challenged the custom on the ground that it was a misappropriation of the parish funds. The origin was so lost in the mists of antiquity that it was impossible to produce evidence in justification of the observance, and so it was, perforce, given up. But I well remember how heartily we younger members of the family anathematized the disestabliher of the church-cakes.

By the time I had left school, I had begun to be a little tired of the humdrum methods of the City Church, though my father was a punctual attendant at it, and always actively interested himself in the affairs of the parish, which he had served as churchwarden. Up to that time, I had not satisfactorily settled in my own mind whether I was High, Low or Broad Church. When I started upon my wanderings, my footsteps led me first to St. Aldate's Church, of which Canon Christopher, the leading light of the Evangelicals, was rector. No one, whatever his faith, could fail to have anything but admiration for the zeal, devotion and earnestness he brought to bear in his

ministrations. Although unswervingly steadfast in his profession of the faith in which he put his whole trust, his sincerity of purpose and Christian charity won the hearts even of those who differed most from his views, and neither side said a word of the other that could be construed as unkind from a personal aspect. This, in such a theological hotbed as Oxford then was, is something worth mentioning. His powerful preaching attracted me for a time, and then I began to be desirous of hearing what the other side had to say.

Having acted upon this, I found a moderately High Church service so far to my liking, that I attended it in preference to any other. I will frankly admit that it was the music and the general brightness of the service rather than the doctrine which attracted me. I used also frequently to attend the University service at St. Mary's on Sunday morning, which gave me the privilege of hearing most of the leading theologians of the English Church at that time. Thus I had the privilege of listening to Wilberforce, who confirmed me, Pusey, Ryle, Liddon, Jowett, Thompson, Farrar, Stanley, Temple, Magee, and other eminent clerics. I also took the opportunity, when it offered, of hearing Divines of note belonging to other denominations, including Newman, Spurgeon, Dr. Cumming, Dr. Parker, Pearsall Smith, Moody and Sankey, and others. I forbear notifying my preferences as to preachers, as I should not know where to stop, and should probably lay myself open to the charge of being too cosmopolitan in my tastes, but I will go so far as to say that for extemporaneous pulpit-oratory of the highest intellectual type, I never heard any one who, to my mind, could surpass Magee. But, when it came to a prepared sermon, Liddon was *facile princeps*.

The hearing of so many diversified opinions might possibly induce a breadth of view otherwise unattainable, but, at the same time, such a varied assortment of doctrines might, of course, tend to instability. Such a liability was indicated in a remark by an old University official, who, having to be present in attendance on the Vice-Chancellor at all sermons preached before the University, heard in

succession the ablest exponents of every conceivable school of thought within the Church. In a sentence pregnant with meaning, he once said : " I have attended St. Mary's regularly for forty years, and, thank Heaven, I am a Christian still ! " Speaking for myself, after a long lapse of years, I rejoice that I had the benefit of the first-hand opinions of so many distinguished Divines, because I think I was helped on by it to that final stage of belief which will be referred to later on.

It is impossible to refer to the ecclesiastical side of the early Victorian era without special reference to its most distinguishing feature—the rise and development of the Tractarian movement. The advent of Tractarianism may be said to have roused the Church from its slumbers, and, from the forces it brought into being, to have indirectly had a greater effect upon its inner life, influence, and development than anything that had befallen it since the Reformation. My father was, from the first, opposed to the movement, in the belief that it was the highway to Rome, and the number of distinguished adherents as well as others of the rank and file, who, between 1840 and 1850, crossed the rubicon afforded not a little justification for this belief. Tractarianism may be said to have passed out of existence as an active force with the secession to Rome of Newman, Ward, and others in 1845, and was thenceforth more a foundation to build upon than anything else. But, although its activity ceased, it afforded practical evidence of its vitality by giving birth to the Catholic or High Church party, whose influence upon the Church has been enduring. Tractarianism was theological and theoretical rather than practical, and its exponents were erudite scholars, whereas the moving spirits of the movement which was the outcome of it were parochial clergy, who expressed their sympathies in developing the ornate side of the services.

Naturally, strong objection was taken by those accustomed to the old order of things to what they regarded as unlawful innovations, but it must be admitted that the new men brought an order and reverence into Divine worship which had previously been too often lacking.



REV. J. H. NEWMAN,  
WHEN VICAR OF ST. MARY'S, OXFORD  
*Reproduced from a pen-and-ink sketch*



I could give instances within my own knowledge of the loose, slipshod, often irreverential, way in which church services were frequently conducted before the advent of the innovators. Most of these were men of cultivated tastes with some knowledge of the arts, which thereby became handmaids of religion. Music was much more fully utilized as an aid to devotion, whilst the decorative arts were drawn upon for the beautifying of the fabric. A greater knowledge and a deeper appreciation of the past, in an architectural sense, were manifested. This was sorely needed, for many an ancient church, for lack of such knowledge, had in the past suffered irreparable damage owing to so-called "restoration," whilst our new churches were mostly commonplace or worse. So it is small wonder that many who were not keen theologians were attracted to churches where their emotions were stirred by a service which made an appeal to the eye and the ear as well as the soul. Other sections of the Church and even Nonconformists have taken a leaf out of the same book by brightening their services, since the example was set them. As is pretty sure to be the case in all movements, the High Church party has given birth to extremists, whose doctrines and practices go beyond those of the ordinary Churchman. It must be remembered that Pusey was never a Ritualist, and this is borne out by his utterances.

The after-developments of Tractarianism led to the indulgence of hopes that "the Reunion of Christendom" might be brought within the area of realization, but time has done little to encourage such aspirations. A creed, with its many complexities, to which "all who profess and call themselves Christians" can subscribe, will take as much finding as the Philosopher's Stone, and either of such apparent boons would probably disappoint expectations in the working. The English Church, as represented by the great majority of its adherents, is hardly likely to disown the main principles laid down at the Reformation, and it is an injustice to other Churches, which are honestly working out their own salvation in their own way, to suppose that, for the sake of a problematical unity, they would forego any of their cherished beliefs. We can rejoice

in the thought of the real unity to come in Heaven and in the knowledge of the spiritual competition on earth. So long as the various Christian bodies are striving in a spirit of praiseworthy emulation for the betterment of the human race—and in no period of our history was this more manifest than now—we may be of good cheer, and, possessing our souls in patience, leave the rest in the hands of an All-wise Providence.

During the early and middle Victorian period, especially, three parties belonging to the Church of England, represented under their respective designations of High, Low, and Broad Church, waged war upon each other while struggling for the right to exist upon their own terms. Oxford being, from time immemorial, a battle-ground for religious controversy, any one on the spot, as I was, was likely to see and hear more of the smoke and din of war than another entirely outside the fighting area, especially as my father took a small part in the fray; his weapon being his pen. My own interest in what was transpiring and the information I thereby gained in my young days in matters of religious controversy and University affairs generally stood me in good stead later on when I dropped into journalism, and the clerical side of it especially. It fell to my lot to furnish a weekly news-letter to two different religious organs, and, having some respect for the opinions of others, I felt able to do justice to both in a broad-minded spirit, though I admit that toleration is not an invariable characteristic of religious newspapers.

The University has afforded many opportunities for rival theologians to test their strength, and, until comparatively recent times, a pitched battle on the floor of the Convocation House between the contending parties was the favourite mode of letting off steam. In the end, it was all a question of votes, and the majority naturally concluded that Providence was on the side of the big battalions. The practical ineffectiveness of thus settling points of doctrine was indicated by after-results.

The celebrated Hampden case occurred before my day, but, as the controversy respecting it lasted for years, I was in time to catch its dying echoes. At the instigation,

especially, of Newman—before he left the English Church—and other of the Tractarian leaders, Dr. Hampden was, on the ground of latitudinarian tendencies, formally condemned by a vote of Convocation, and deprived of certain privileges which he, as Regius Professor of Divinity, exercised. Yet, although he never recanted, he was considered by a higher power than the University sufficiently orthodox to be afterwards appointed to the bishopric of Hereford.

Pusey, who had been active in bringing Hampden to book, himself came under the ban of Convocation for supposed Romanizing tendencies, and was suspended from preaching before the University for two years. This did not modify his views, although it added to the sphere of his influence, and at the expiration of the two years he took up the thread of his discourse at the point where he had dropped it, and went on as though nothing had happened. When he passed away the University mourned the loss of one of its greatest theologians and most saintly of men.

Mr. Ward, of Balliol, the next victim, was degraded, and disfranchised for erring in a similar direction to Pusey. He afterwards did his best to afford some justification for the action of Convocation by joining the Romish Church, though whether or not this was accelerated by the efforts made to dispense with him in the English Church is a matter of opinion.

There was now a lull in the storm, and this afforded time for a junction to be effected between the High and the Low Church for joint operations against the Broad. A doubt was soon raised as to Jowett's orthodoxy, and, as a preliminary, he was straightway haled before the Hebdomadal Council. As, however, he, with cheerful alacrity, professed himself as ready and willing to sign the Thirty-nine Articles, he was for the moment let off. But his turn for censure was not long coming. As Professor of Greek, his stipend was neither more nor less than £40, and a proposal to make a more adequate acknowledgment of his work was resisted in Convocation on the score that, although his qualifications as an exponent of the

Greek language and literature were unimpeachable, his orthodoxy was not. So high did feeling run that no less than 862 members of Convocation voted upon the question, and by a majority of 72 it was decided that Jowett, plus his theological opinions, was not worth more than £40 a year for teaching purposes. But, as Christ Church then took upon itself to rectify this by providing out of its own funds a more suitable endowment for the professorship, Jowett was no loser, from a pecuniary point of view, in the end. At the first opportunity afterwards he was selected as the only possible ruler of Balliol, of which he was and will be *the* Master, *par excellence*, and, in due course, "the little heretic," as he was styled, presided as Vice-Chancellor over the very body which had sat in judgment upon him. He lived to be the man whom the University delighted to honour. Yet he never recanted.

Again were the combative sections up in arms when Dr. Temple was nominated as one of the University select preachers, his share in the "Essays and Reviews," being regarded by the objectors as sufficient evidence of heterodoxy to disqualify him from preaching. The air was full of protests, and Dean Goulburn described the endorsement of the nomination as "a miserable apostasy from the principles which once animated the University." Nevertheless, Dr. Temple, not many years afterwards, was comfortably seated in the Chair of St. Augustine, and was consequently the highest authority as to what was or was not orthodoxy.

There was another call to arms in 1872 when Dean Stanley was nominated as one of the select preachers, and once more High and Low Church joined hands with a view to keeping the other section of the Church out of the pulpit. The united forces mustered well, but the lay element came to the rescue of the other side, and many a busy professional man ran down from town to back up "the little dean" as they called him. Six hundred and thirty-six voters attended the meeting of Convocation, and, by a majority of 62, the Dean was permitted to preach. It is difficult now to understand what the gain would have been to the University had the majority been the other way. That

was the last of the attempts at the theological censure in my time, and, although one can admire the sincerity and the courage of the attacking parties, it is safe to predict that the spirit of toleration is now sufficiently strong as to militate against similar efforts to enforce a rigid standard of orthodoxy in the future.

## CHAPTER XXIX

An Old-fashioned High Churchman—A Surprise Visit—A Slantorum—Colenso—Eternal Hope—An Untenable Belief—The Brotherhood of Sacrifice.

**S**T. MARY'S was the Parish, as well as the University, Church. Morning Prayer, followed by a short address, succeeded the University sermon, and I often remained for this. At the time of which I am speaking the vicar was the Rev. J. W. Burgon, afterwards Dean of Chichester. I will devote some space to him, both because he was a very remarkable man and because he represented a type fast dying out. He was a modern embodiment of the old-fashioned High Churchman, and a Tory of Tories in religious and other matters. Consequently, his High Churchism was far removed from Ritualism, to which he took strong exception. A kinder-hearted man in the ordinary affairs of life it would be difficult to find, but when it came to points of doctrine he was severely uncompromising.

Burgon was a great theologian, having a wonderful knowledge of the Scriptures, and he was no mean poet. His pulpit utterances were distinguished alike by their acumen, their erudition, and their freedom of expression. If he thought a thing he said it regardless of consequences, and you might take it or leave it as you might prefer. Naturally, he was not infrequently in hot water, but his transparent sincerity went a long way towards neutralizing verbal indiscretions and to soften animosities. Besides, he was a man with a personality—and a very distinct one—which took him right out of the common ruck, and the world appreciates too much those who come under this category to be unduly hard upon them. He had an impression that the State did not sufficiently recognize the

sacerdotal character of the priesthood, and I heard him declare in one of his discourses that "ministers of the Gospel are regarded by the Government as little better than clerical policemen, whose chief function is to help keep the peace." On another occasion, when I was present, some one walked out of the church before Burgon had finished his address, so the preacher came to a dead-stop, and, amid a breathless silence, said, "When that gentleman has reached the door I will resume my remarks." It so happened that the offender was a buttery official at Oriel, of which college Burgon was a fellow, and within whose walls he resided. The walker-out afterwards explained this to his rebuker, and added that if he had not absented himself when he did the vicar's chance of luncheon that Sunday morning would have been in jeopardy.

Burgon had an inherent dislike to change of any sort, especially in relation to the Church, and so the alterations embodied in the Speaker's Lectionary did not meet with his approval. A clerical friend told me that when one Sunday Burgon, as Dean of Chichester, had to read a Lesson in the Cathedral not long after the adoption of the Lectionary, when he had uttered the customary words, "Here endeth the first lesson," Burgon in a very audible aside added, "And heaven only knows why!" In an age when the tendency is to reduce all mankind to one dead level, it was refreshing to come into contact with a personality so much out of the ordinary run as was Dean Burgon.

Hard as he was upon all whom he regarded as heretics, his general good nature and simple-minded generosity, shown in innumerable ways in his parish, were proverbial. Although a confirmed bachelor, he adored children, and would often pick up any he met in the street or in their walks for the sole pleasure of giving them a kiss and a cheery word or two. His fondness for their company and the pleasure it gave him to do anything to unloose their springs of laughter once led him into an uncomfortable position. Near the University Park at Oxford is a row of houses known as Museum Terrace, the habitations composing it being all exactly of the same type both externally and interiorly. Burgon was on very intimate terms with

a family, numbering in it several children, living in one of these houses. One winter's evening he planned what he thought would be a delightful surprise for the little folk. He gently opened the front door, and, wrapping himself in the door-mat, stealthily crept upstairs to, as he thought it, the nursery. Then, barking as much like a dog as he knew how, he burst into the room on his hands and knees and frisked round it to the indescribable terror of two maiden ladies, who were seated at the table quietly knitting. Burgon in the darkness had unwittingly entered the house next door to the one for which this *coup* was intended. A volley of shrieks, instead of the hilarious merriment he had anticipated, greeted his canine impersonation. Even when not habited in a door-mat, Burgon's appearance was always rather awe-inspiring. He was extremely tall and had strongly marked features, including very prominent eyebrows, set in a long-drawn-out countenance. So it can be quite imagined that the startling suddenness of his entrance on this occasion, coupled with a very unusual mode of progression when entering a room, was quite sufficient to try the nerves of any one unexpectant of such a strange visitation. Explanations and most contrite apologies followed and were accepted, and it is to be hoped that the ladies in question knew Burgon sufficiently well to acquit him of any desire to frighten them out of their wits. Some years afterwards *Punch* illustrated the incident but without any reference to the principal actor in it.

Burgon was a devoted parish priest, entering into all the joys and sorrows of his flock, and a little story to illustrate this may be worth the telling. There lived in his parish a man, Sam Pinniger—this was not his real name, but will serve—who never went near the church, and regarded parsons as persons for whom he had no use. I knew him sufficiently to exchange signs of recognition when we met, but I could not hold my own with him in conversation. By mere force of habit and with no real intention to be profane, he embellished the most ordinary utterances with the fullest-flavoured expletives. He was an iconoclast in most things, and aired his somewhat flamboyant opinions at a well-known hostelry, where

congenial spirits nightly met to settle the affairs of the nation and moisten long clays with hot brandy and water. They occasionally lightened the labours of debate by inventing and perpetrating ingenious practical jokes, and they had a well-established reputation for their proficiency in the art. Their exploits in this direction were so craftily contrived that the victim was never able to put the responsibility upon any particular individual, although he might know pretty well where the plot was concocted. These plots were of the nature of "hatch-ups," and frequently took the form of an epistolary communication, technically known as a "slantorum"—I may say I never heard this term outside my native city—its object being to send its recipient on some wild-goose chase or another. Sam, who was usually an active participator in these little affairs, happened to fall sick and was laid up for some time. This coming to the ears of the vicar, the latter, although he could hardly count Sam as one of his flock, determined to pay him a visit of sympathy. Before doing so he directed the college cook to supply him with a nice light pudding most suitable for an invalid, and with it he betook himself to Sam's domicile. Sam was surprised beyond measure to see the vicar, but his astonishment knew no bounds when, as he afterwards described it to his confrères, "The long 'un puts his 'and into his pocket and brings out as nice a little puddin' as ever you tasted, and he says, 'There, Mr. Pinniger, I 'ope that'll tempt your happetite!' and what's more it did." Sam so highly appreciated this attention that he held forth upon the virtues of the vicar in a way that, having regard to his usual utterances respecting clerics, individually and collectively, was a revelation to his hearers. The latter were so impressed with what Sam had told them about the company he had been keeping that they thought it would be a pity if he didn't see a bit more of it. So, on behalf of the vicar, they indited an invitation to Sam to breakfast with him at Oriel on a specified morning, a postscript adding, "Don't trouble to reply to this, but come."

Sam was supremely flattered at this invitation, and, arriving punctually at the hour named, was somewhat

taken aback to learn that the vicar had not yet risen. Sam, concluding that his host had inadvertently overslept himself, patiently waited till he put in an appearance. When he did so, he cheerfully greeted Sam, and forthwith breakfast was served, but to Sam's intense surprise only for one, and the vicar by his hearty attack upon it left no room for doubt as to who that one was. When Sam saw the eggs and bacon disappearing without any suggestion that he should join in the repast, his astonishment knew no bounds. The vicar all the time was marvelling why Pinniger should sit there apparently simply to see him eat his breakfast. At last, Sam having made no reference to why he had come, the vicar, who had exhausted the topic of the weather, said, in the blandest of tones, "And to what circumstance, Mr. Pinniger, do I owe the pleasure of this visit?" Sam, in a maze of wonderment and with his eyes nearly starting out of his head, managed to articulate, "Why, didn't you invite me?" "Not that I am aware of," said the vicar. "What, isn't this your note?" said Sam, producing it. "No," said the vicar, "I have never seen it before." Then all in a moment the truth flashed across Sam's brain, and, oblivious of the presence he was in, he gave vent to his stricken feelings by gasping out, "A slantorum, by ——!" The vicar, who had not the remotest idea how this accounted for Sam's presence, wisely ignored the irreverence of the exclamation, and, rising to the occasion, in the most genial of accents, said, "Whatever brought you here, Mr. Pinniger, I am very glad to see you, and shall only be too pleased if you will join me at breakfast," and translated this into action by directing his scout to procure a further supply of eggs and bacon forthwith.

Sam readily acquiesced in this, and, by the time he had finished his meal, he had supplied the vicar with amply sufficient material relating to "slantorums" to enable him to write an essay upon the subject were he so inclined. As Sam, by dint of exercising unwonted control over his parts of speech, managed by a process of elimination to avoid administering any further verbal shock to the vicar, the time passed pleasantly enough for both, and they parted

with mutual expressions of esteem. "All's well that ends well!" and Sam was so pleased with his reception and the quality of his breakfast-fare that he felt that there was no necessity to keep the facts to himself; hence my ability to retail it as one instance, among many, of the kindly good nature of Burgon, whose theological belligerency was apt to mislead people with respect to his real disposition. I should like to have rounded off the story properly by saying that Sam became a steady church-goer from that time forth, but, although this is quite possible, I have no evidence on the point, so cannot vouch for it myself. It is, however, quite safe to say that the relationship between himself and the vicar was on a much more friendly footing than it had ever been before. So, for once, it may be admitted that practical joking led up to some good.

After I had browsed in various theological pastures for some years, the death of my father, in 1867, led to my becoming a householder in my old parish of St. Martin's. As I thought then that everybody ought, unless there was strong reason to the contrary, to attend the church of the parish in which he dwelt, I applied this principle to myself, and, although I was not enamoured of the service, I made my devotions at St. Martin's. I likewise took sufficient interest in the parish affairs to be elected on its Church Council, and ultimately became the people's warden. St. Martin's Church, endeared to me by many memories, has supplied a striking reminder of the instability of human hopes. During the time I was churchwarden it was resolved to renovate and beautify the interior of the edifice. My colleague and myself succeeded in collecting the necessary funds, and spent a good deal of time in superintending the disbursement thereof. We were, however, happy in the thought that we should deserve well of generations of worshippers yet to come, and should be held in corresponding remembrance. Alas, all such hopes were shattered, for the church has since been pulled down in order to widen the thoroughfare, and all the results of our efforts have likewise disappeared. Happily, the old tower, which was the only ancient part of the fabric, was spared. The rest of the church was modern, my

uncle having been the architect, and it replaced an older church.

The parishioners of St. Martin's, speaking generally, were not keen theologians. We had, however, one ecclesiastical breeze during my time. One day it was suddenly announced by handbill that Bishop Colenso would preach on the following Sunday. A theological storm of no ordinary violence had raged round Colenso for some time previously. As may be remembered, he was, on account of his work on the *Pentateuch*, tried for heresy by an ecclesiastical court at Cape Town, and sentenced to be deprived of his bishopric, although this decision was overruled by the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council. He had been inhibited from preaching in the dioceses of London, Lincoln and Peterborough, and, therefore, many persons in both University and city were not a little shocked when they found that the rector had invited his lordship to occupy the city pulpit. Meetings were held to protest, and the Bishop of Oxford—Dr. Mackarness—was appealed to. The result of this was that when, on Sunday morning, crowds assembled round the church to obtain early entrance, they found on the door a notice in which the Bishop of Oxford admonished the rector not to suffer the said John William Colenso to perform any ecclesiastical function in the parish. Notwithstanding this intimation, the church could not by any means accommodate all who desired to be present, for those who knew the rector had an impression that, after all, there would be something to stop for. Nor were they entirely disappointed, for the rector, having ascended the pulpit, calmly announced that he would himself deliver the sermon which Bishop Colenso would have preached had he been permitted to do so. The discourse was mainly a plea for liberty of conscience, and was not of a controversial character. At its finish, a collection was made on behalf of those of the clergy of Natal who had remained faithful to Bishop Colenso. But if the sympathy of a densely crowded church may be gauged by the value of the contributions, it did not amount to much, for £8 and a few halfpence constituted the sum total of the offerings.

The only part I had in the matter was respectfully to decline to take my usual charge of one of the collecting-bags that day, as, having always had some regard for those in authority, I was averse to being, even indirectly, a party to the flouting of our own diocesan. In the evening of the same day, Bishop Colenso preached in Balliol College Chapel, over which the bishop of the diocese had no jurisdiction.

Not long after I had settled down in the parish we had a rector, a Broad Churchman, whose teaching followed that of Archdeacon Farrar. I began by doubting his inferences and conclusions, but this did not keep me away from the church, and the more I listened the nearer I got to accepting them. In the end he convinced me, and "the doctrine of Eternal Hope" for all became a reality to me, and has remained so ever since. There naturally followed in its train the abandonment of such dogmatic teaching of my youth as hedged in heaven with many restrictions, and peopled it only with the comparatively select few who professed certain articles of faith. My old rector, to whom I have already referred, after warning his congregation against a narrow dogmatism, once dryly remarked: "Many of those who get to heaven will probably be much surprised at the number of persons there whom they did not anticipate meeting." The gospel of toleration rather than that of a mechanical orthodoxy appealed to me, and, whatever may be the result of its adoption so far as the next world is concerned, it has had the advantage on this earth of enabling me to participate in many forms of Christian worship without any of those uneasy qualms which previously possessed me in my severely orthodox days. So I am grateful to my old rector for a teaching which broadened the lines of my belief and for implanting in me a better conception than I ever had before of a Great Father, open to the pleadings of His children through an intercessory Saviour, rather than that of a Great Judge dispensing punishments.

I once heard an eminent Divine at St. Mary's, Oxford, say that he wouldn't give a fig for a creed that did not everlastingly condemn all who did not accept it, and since

then I have listened to the same doctrine preached in a more roundabout way in other pulpits. It is equivalent to saying that only the comparatively select few, who belong to some particular Church and subscribe to some particular creed, can escape eternal damnation. It is the output of that uncompromising orthodoxy, of which the nation's history furnishes too many examples, and which persecuted a believer one day for being a Protestant and the next for being a Romanist.

Man, in the old days, judging his Maker by himself, credited Him with such pitiless, unrelenting vindictiveness as nothing less than never-ending, fiery torments could appease. But we may take comfort in the thought that it is inconceivable that those who nowadays profess such a faith really believe it in their inmost hearts.

The law of Evolution, happily, applies to religion as well as to nature, and this accounts for much of our modern tolerance. As one who has been a regular church-goer for nearly seventy years, I rejoice at the advance of humanitarianism in religious as well as secular life, and to be able to associate it, in its initiatory stages, with the days of Victoria. The happy commingling, amid the din of war, of the accredited representatives of various beliefs, and the mutual help they have been to each other as well as to the cause of humanity, will go far to break down the barriers which a mistaken past set up, and to neutralize the inexorable dictums of a rigid, unbending orthodoxy. Beyond this, we cannot lose sight of the fact that men of many different creeds are fighting side by side and laying down their lives on behalf of a cause representing the highest attributes of Christianity. A writer in the London Press recently put the case in words which must come home to many when he said : " Serious as such differences may be, the soldier, on the eve of battle, knows that the Romans, the Anglicans, and the Nonconformists are remembering the same Great Act, and are communing, however dimly, with the same Lord ; and, after all, to-morrow they may be, all of them, where they will understand the Truth and pass out of their shadows."

In one's old age one marvels that men should have

excited themselves so much over mere externals, and it cannot be said that even now we have entirely outgrown this. Of course, every believer holds fast to certain essential truths which cannot be parted or tampered with on any terms, but the longer one lives the more one sees that the main fundamentals are common to most Christian beliefs; how they are applied is the vital point. Though the unity of Christendom, in the sense in which it is commonly understood, may not be within the pale of practical politics, there are not wanting opportunities for all Christian people to stand shoulder to shoulder in furtherance of the cause of truth and righteousness, and of the amelioration of the world's condition. This needs no abandonment of cherished beliefs on either side, nor the surrender of what Time has hallowed. If, however, we take full advantage of every call for united effort on behalf of the common weal, we shall be nearer than we have ever been in the past to attaining that unity of the spirit in the bond of peace, so much to be desired. Should the war result, as we both hope and believe it will, in a closer contact and a kindlier understanding between all classes, whether in religious, political or social life, it will have conferred upon the whole nation a priceless boon, and will bring us perceptibly nearer to realizing the words of the poet, who said :

“Spurning old narrow paths, men's feet have trod  
In larger ways, and found the larger God.”

## CHAPTER XXX

The Last Furrow—Indebtedness of the Present to the Past—A Great Queen  
—A Mitigatory Plea—The Faith of an Optimist.

I HAVE reached my last furrow, as represented by my concluding chapter. Judged by the area my plough—otherwise my pen—has traversed, it is time, if only for the sake of others who have borne with me, to give it a rest. According to the Elegy, when the day's work is done, "the ploughman homeward plods his *weary* way." But this pre-supposes that he has been ploughing a solitary furrow without the cheery companionship of old memories to lighten his labour and alleviate his weariness. I have no such excuse if I show symptoms of being wayworn; I can only trust that I have not wearied others.

Ere I take my hand from the plough, let me make it clear that, though I have a special regard for the period which saw most of my strugglings and strivings, I am not one of those who sigh for the days that are past, for I would not exchange the present for them. But there is something to attract in every age, and the times of which I have been speaking were well worth living in, if only because one has seen in them the initiation and development of many great movements having a material bearing upon the future of one's country.

We often hear the present day described as a high-pressure age, and old folk sigh for the more easy-going—as they fancy—times of the early and mid-Victorian period. They lament the swirl and rush, the wear and tear and the stress and strain we now undergo, and they do not always regard the discoveries of science and the fertility of modern invention in the light of blessings. I have a friend who feels this so strongly that he would consign all inventors,

as the worst enemies of the human race, to a region where their efforts would be of no avail. I do not share these views. On the contrary, I regard the facilities under which work can now be conducted, in comparison with those available in the days when I first became a worker, as smoothing the path and lessening the friction of life. The extension of railways, and the increase in the comforts and conveniences of travel, the cheapening and development of the telegraphic system, and the introduction of the electric light, the telephone, wireless telegraphy, typewriters, motor-cars, and all such aids to the rapid and more easy discharge of life's duties, are to my mind blessings which should induce in the mind of the worker a feeling of thankfulness that they are at his disposal. Rightly used, I believe, their tendency, by reducing wear and tear, is to lengthen rather than lessen the duration of life. Speaking generally, it is worry, not work, that kills people, and there were plenty who died of it in the days of our forefathers.

At any rate, no one can doubt the inestimable blessings conferred upon suffering humanity in comparatively recent times in the region of medicine and surgery especially, and which have done so much to alleviate pain and to prolong existence. The extension of the use of anæsthetics and antiseptics, the introduction of the Röntgen rays, and the discovery of radium, are all to the good of those who live in these times. But one may remember that, in common with many other discoveries and inventions of lesser importance, they were in process of incubation in Victorian days, although it has been left to later times to develop and extend their use in a way that not only extracts fuller benefits from their adoption, but has enabled them to be utilized for the relief of the poor as well as the rich in our hospitals and infirmaries.

We have, too, special reason to be grateful to the Victorian era for its legislative efforts to combat ignorance, poverty and crime, and for its public and private philanthropy, which did much to alleviate the lot of the feeble folk of the realm. Although we are still only touching the fringe of many great problems, we may be thankful

for the preliminary help towards their solution rendered in the days which have been my theme.

And, amid it all, there stands out, as the central figure, the Great Queen who presided so long and so beneficently over the nation's destinies. The more closely all that lies beneath the surface of those times is investigated, the more apparent is the debt the nation owed and still owes to the Sovereign whose influence and example stood for so much. The unblemished purity of her life, the single-mindedness of her aims, and the human sympathy which rendered her a true mother of her people, conferred unspeakable blessings upon those over whom she reigned, and will be a heritage for good to generations yet unborn. The standard of public duty she set up, and the sympathetic affection for her people, which guided her every action, have happily been maintained to the full by her successors on the Throne, and this has gone far to render the Monarchy secure from assault in these troublous latter days.

In endeavouring to depict such of the outstanding features of the Victorian past as came within my sphere of observation, I will admit I have not discoursed much in "the Ercles vein," but, if I am to be reproached for my many trivialities, I would submit that the record of my experiences would not have been "a human document" without them. Then, if I have not always been sufficiently serious, did I not give warning beforehand of my liability to fall short of expectations in this respect? I have dwelt upon the recreative as well as the workaday side of life, in the belief that our capacity for reasonable enjoyment was intended to be brought into use, so long as it hindered not our spiritual and material progress. Even old age does not necessarily imply an entire exemption from the light-heartedness of youth, though time may have somewhat mellowed this. "It's a poor heart that never rejoices," and I shall be in a bad way when my springs of laughter are dried up and all sense of comedy has died out of me. When, in the lean and slippered stage, bodily aches assail us, memory, which, as the poet says, "is given to mortals that they may have roses in December," comes to rejuvenate us.

And in harking back upon the past, it is borne in upon me how much I owe to both living and dead for the sunshine in my latter days of many happy thoughts. Although in my narrative they have not loomed large, I have had my trials and difficulties, like my brother-mortals, and I would not have it supposed that it was "roses, roses, all the way with me"; I went "through the mill" of hard work, as do most who have to fend for themselves. I am glad that in this respect I shared the common lot, for I can see how my life was shaped by it. But, had it not been for the good help and sympathy of my fellow-men, I must have fallen by the way.

Sam Slick was convincingly right when he said that life was "not all beer and skittles." If it were, it would be barren of memories worth the garnering, for toil is essential to the realization of hopes and aspirations. Robert Louis Stevenson reminds us that "the world was not made for us alone; it was made for ten hundred millions of men, all different from each other, and from us; there is no royal road, we just have to clamber and tumble." It is this clambering and tumbling—this struggle for existence—that gives a savour to life and relieves it from dull monotony. But the same writer reminds us that the great gift of life is not vouchsafed to us without a corresponding responsibility. "To live," he says, "is sometimes very difficult, but it is never meritorious in itself; and we must have a reason to allege to our own conscience why we should continue to exist upon this crowded earth." This may seem a hard condition, but without it we cannot realize the ambition that glows in the natural desire to leave the world better than we found it. "Hope springs eternal in the human breast," and, looking back through a vista of years, of recorded history and old memories, I am optimistic enough to re-echo Whittier's article of belief, and to make my adieu in his words so full of good cheer, of eternal hope: "Of course the world is growing better; the Lord reigns; our old planet is swinging slowly into fuller light; I despair of nothing good. All will come in due time that is really needed. All we have to do is to work—and to wait."

The first part of the history of the United States is the period from the discovery of the continent by Christopher Columbus in 1492 to the establishment of the first permanent settlements. This period is characterized by the exploration of the continent by Spanish, French, and English explorers, and the establishment of the first permanent settlements by the English in 1607. The second part of the history is the period from the establishment of the first permanent settlements to the American Revolution in 1776. This period is characterized by the growth of the colonies, the struggle for independence, and the establishment of the United States as a new nation. The third part of the history is the period from the American Revolution to the present. This period is characterized by the development of the United States as a major world power, the expansion of its territory, and the growth of its population. The fourth part of the history is the period from the present to the future. This period is characterized by the continued development of the United States as a major world power, the expansion of its territory, and the growth of its population.

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